Today's The Herald-Palladium included inside

Girls soccer star steps up for Dowagiac football
**Page B1**

**Stay Safe**

Be mindful of your surroundings, especially in unfamiliar or dimly lit areas. Trust your instincts - if something feels off, move to a safer location if possible. Encourage neighbors to establish a neighborhood watch program to keep our communities safe.

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# Dowagiac News

Established 1897 • Serving Dowagiac, Sister Lakes and Cassopolis **OCTOBER 4, 2025** leaderpub.com • A publication of The Herald-Palladium **$4**


# Dowagiac District Library welcomes new director

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — After more than 35 years of curating a treasure trove of tales for the communities across the country to enjoy, Tom Shilts is embarking on a brand new adventure in the Grand Old City. Shilts has spent the past month settling into his new role as library director for Dowagiac District Library.

Shilts succeeds Matthew Weston, has stepped down as director of the library in May after 10 years of service.

"Dowagiac is a nice place," he said. "I knew almost nothing about this part of the state. It is a nice town, the storefronts are in great shape and there are lots of opportunities."

Shilts has worked in libraries for many years, most recently at Bellaire Public Library. Prior to that he was a youth services librarian at the Okemos branch of Capital Area District Library.

According to Shilts, the transition process been smooth thanks to the work of the library staff.

"The staff has done a great job keeping the services and programming going," Shilts said. "I have been very impressed. "

Coming from his most recent stop in Bellaire, a small village in northwest Michigan, Shilts said he was searching for something a little bit bigger with more opportunity and Dowagiac checked both boxes.

"One of the great things about working in a standalone library like this is you can be more nimble," he said. "You just have your one library and can make decisions in a more streamlined way."

With extensive experience as a youth services librarian, Shilts is looking forward to helping the library grow its youth and toddler offerings. The library held its first-ever Toddler Story and Play Time Thursday, where Shilts will host a story and play time at 10:30 a.m. on Thursdays designed for children one to three years old.

"We offer a nice slate of programming for every age group but nothing for ages 1-3, so I think this will help address that," he said.

According to Shilts, libraries are important "destination" spaces in their communities with a variety of free resources available.

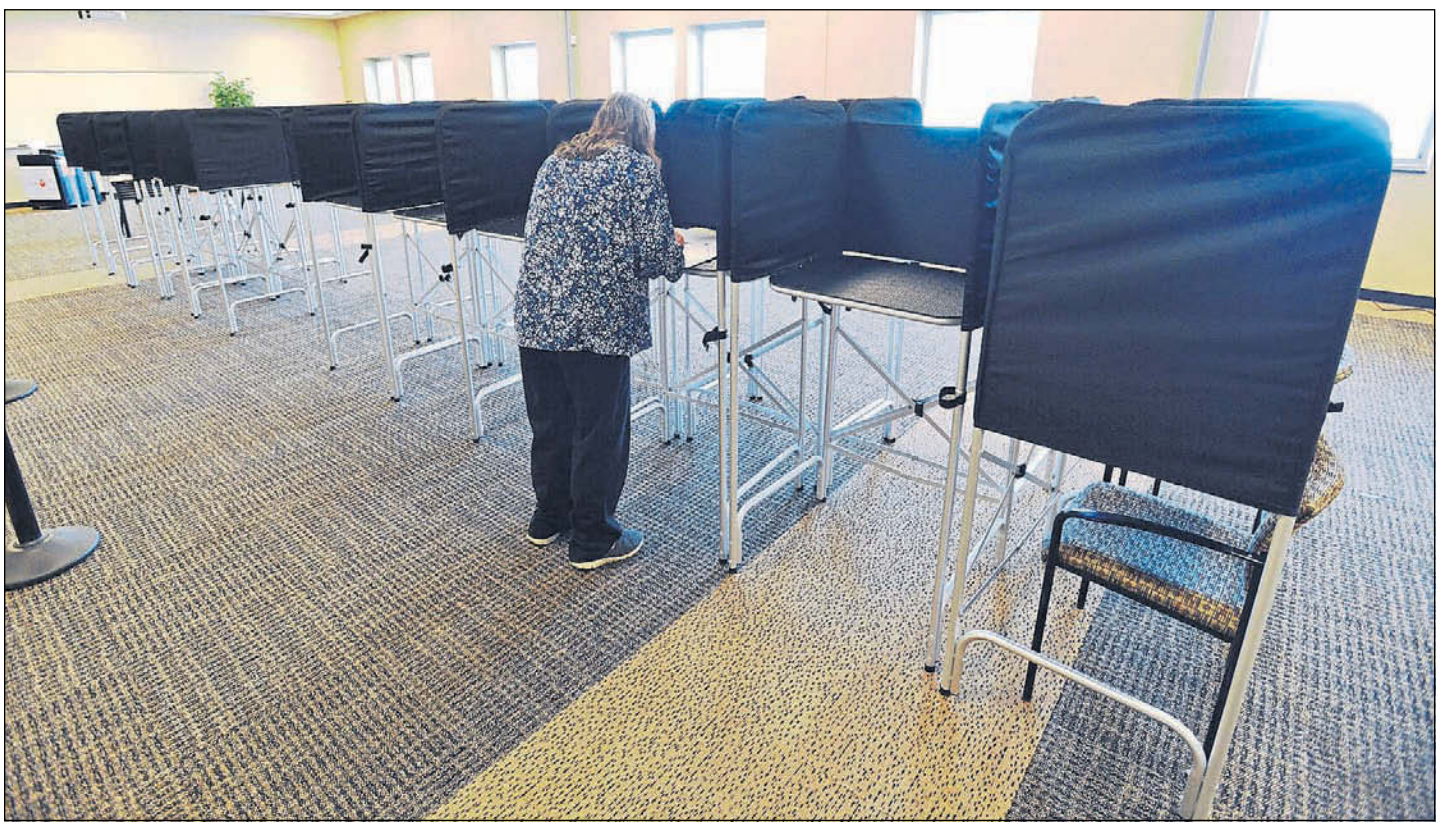
"There is nowhere you can go where you can go and not have to spend money," he said. "Here you can come in, don't have to buy coffee or dessert to relax and read. It's a great way to connect with people."

Shilts looks forward to learning more about his patrons and the Dowagiac community. He applauded the recent expansion and renovations, including the new study and conference rooms. He believes the library is equipped to serve the community.

In a small town, [libraries] are sometimes the office away from the office. They fill a lot of roles," he said. "I believe that we are here to provide what people are interested in. We will try to keep the collection as balanced and fair as possible in a way that represents everyone. Everyone pays for it, so it is here for everyone to use."

Photo provided

**Tom Shilts began his role as director of Dowagiac District Library last month.**



Don Campbell / HP file photo

**Karen Metz takes advantage of early voting in February 2024 at the Todd Center at Lake Michigan College. While there is some concern that ranked choice voting would make filling out a ballot more complicated, advocates say if people can list their favorite movies, they can rank candidates on a ballot.**

# 'Voter confusion is huge'

## Ranked choice voting receives mixed reviews among SWMI clerks

**By LAUREN RICE**
For Leader Publications

Ranked choice voting as an area of political debate is growing in prominence in Michigan.

Legislation is sitting in the Michigan Senate and Rank MI Vote is sending petitioners out to collect signatures for a ballot initiative. However, area clerks have some concerns about the logistics of changing the system and potential impact on voters.

Ranked choice, also referred to as instant-runoff voting, is a different way of voting. In a ranked choice election, a voter will rank the candidates in order of preference, rather than selecting one intended winner.

The instant runoff happens if there is no candidate who wins the majority, more than 50 percent, of the votes. In that scenario, the candidate who came in last place would be eliminated from the running and those ballots then count for the voter's second choice. The process is repeated until there is a candidate with more than half of the votes.

Berrien County Clerk Stacy Loar-Porter said she worries having a longer or more complicated ballot would dissuade people from showing up at the polls. She pointed out that Michigan is unique compared to other states because of the amount of elected positions and various ballot items voters are presented with.

"Our goal is always to increase voter turnout, whatever it takes to increase voter turnout," she said. "I just worry that if we make it harder, it kind of defeats the purpose."

Cass County Clerk Register Monica McMichael had similar criticisms about voter confusion, spoiled ballots and various costs.

"Everyone who has run an election or worked an election knows voter confusion is huge," McMichael said. "Especially when we have different types of ballots. ... I could only imagine what this would do to voters if they were instructed to vote for certain offices one way and other offices another."

She said it would also take longer for ballots to be filled out and for a final vote to be tabulated at the end of the night. A bigger concern, though, is the cost of new software and retraining for staff and volunteer election inspectors, she said.

See **VOTING**, page A4

# Cass County bird tests positive for West Nile virus

**STAFF REPORT**

CASS COUNTY — A blue heron found in Cass County has tested positive for the West Nile virus, health officials reported Thursday.

According to a news release from the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department, this adds to the statewide total of 69 birds which have tested positive so far in 2025 in Michigan.

West Nile virus is the most common mosquito-borne illness in Michigan and across the United States. It is carried by mosquitoes and can cause mild to severe illness in humans and animals.

Although most people infected with the virus do not experience any symptoms, one in five will develop West Nile fever which includes fever, headache, body aches, fatigue, skin rash and in rare cases, a severe neurological illness.

"Residents are reminded that while the detection of West Nile virus in birds does not guarantee human cases, it serves as an early warning that the virus is present in the local mosquito population," the release stated. "VBCDHD will continue working with state partners to monitor mosquito activity and provide timely updates to the community."

Community members can protect themselves and reduce mosquito breeding by:

- Removing standing water from containers like flowerpots and buckets.
- Using insect repellent registered with the EPA.
- Wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors, especially at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.

For more public health updates, visit VBCassDHD.org. For the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' weekly arbovirus surveillance summary, visit Michigan.gov/EmergingDiseases.

# Under the Harvest Moon Festival returns to downtown Dowagiac Oct. 11

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — Michigan's colorful autumn will take center stage in downtown Dowagiac during the 14th Annual Under the Harvest Moon Festival on Saturday, Oct. 11.

"All the best parts of fall will be on full display in downtown Dowagiac," said Matt Money, Marketing and Event Coordinator for the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce. "From tractors to pumpkins, and cider to much more –it's a celebration of the season."

Throughout the day, downtown retailers will host activities and special in-store promotions, giving festival goers plenty of opportunities to shop local and explore. The festival's centerpiece is its open-air marketplace, featuring more than 60 vendors offering antiques, artisanal and handcrafted goods, fall produce, and sweet treats. Vendors will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Another fan favorite is the display of both new and vintage farm tractors, which add a unique touch of heritage to the fall celebration. Guests can also enjoy live music by the Kalamazoo-based band Special Guest performing from 1 to 4 p.m. in Beckwith Park – festival goers are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and settle in for an afternoon of music.

Children's activities will also run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., hosted by The Bridge Church, ensuring family-friendly fun for all ages. "This event continues to bring together our community while also attracting visitors from across the region," Money added.

The Chamber recognizes the generous support of corporate sponsors that make the festival possible, including Central Produce, Rohdy's Heating and Cooling, Anderson Replacement Windows, UHY Accounting Firm, and US Lumber Company.

For the most up-to-date festival information, visit dowagiacchamber.com or follow the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce on Facebook.

**The 14th Annual Under the Harvest Moon Festival returns to Dowagiac on Saturday, Oct. 11.**
Photo provided

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**Today's obituaries • Page A3**

Robin True
Michael "Mike" Chamberlain
Steven Dodd
Jerome "Jerry" Price
Roman Zehner
Rajesh Nakrani
Jacqueline Smith
Alice Toney

**Inside today's Herald-Palladium**

| | | | | | |
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| Business | C4 | Food | B7 | Puzzles | B4 |
| Comics | B5 | Home & Garden | C7 | Television | D3 |

# FRANKLY

## Tips and quips

*What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7702 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.*

■ This is the United States of America. All people calling for a national divorce or Civil War should leave. You don't belong in this country.

■ Prayers to the families of the victims in the heartbreaking car accident in Pokagon Township this past weekend.

■ The weather was so perfect for a wonderful parade in Niles. Great parade, great people!

■ Thank you, Blossomtime Royalty, Cassopolis, Stevensville, Berrien Springs and Edwardsburg for coming to Niles!

■ Indian Country has lost a tremendous leader with the untimely passing of Ernie Stevens Jr., longtime Chairman of the Indian Gaming Association.

■ Just imagine if Biden couldn't pronounce Acetaminophen. I think Dr. Trump and Dr Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. have not quite gained the trust of Americans when it comes to these medical press conferences.

■ Talk about the pot calling the kettle black. ... Trump is calling Comey a liar ...?

■ Dems have been out to get Trump from the start just because he has not been part of the government bureaucracy that has plagued our nation for years.

■ Ties in the NFL are totally ridiculous. People aren't paying to watch a tie in professional sports.

■ The fighting needs to stop around the world. At the end of the day it all comes down to a few powerful individuals who determine the start of wars and the end of them.

■ Why is no one talking about the Christian murders in Nigeria? It has been reported that over 7,000 Christians were killed in the first 220 days of 2025 alone.

## WEATHER

**Saturday:** Sunny; high near 87. Southwest wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Saturday Night:** Mostly clear; low around 59. South wind around 5 mph.

**Sunday:** Sunny; high near 85.

**Sunday Night:** Mostly clear; low around 61.

**Monday:** A 20 percent chance of showers after 2 p.m. Sunny; high near 82.

**Monday Night:** A 40 percent chance of showers, mainly after 8 p.m.. Partly cloudy; low around 57.

**Tuesday:** Showers likely. Mostly cloudy; high near 75.

# Apple Festival Grande Parade

## MARCHES THROUGH NILES

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Sunny skies, warm temperatures and bunches of bubbles greeted the thousands of spectators who lined the streets of Downtown Niles to watch the 53rd Apple Festival Grande Parade on Sept. 27.

The annual festival kicked off Sept. 25 at the Apple Festival grounds, located at the corner of Lake and 17th streets. Events at the Apple Festival grounds ran through Sept. 28.

**The 53rd Apple Festival Grande Parade rolled through Niles Saturday, Sept. 27.** Photos by Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

# Cass Family Clinic opens Niles dental center

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Photo provided

**Cass Family Clinic's Board of Directors Board Chair Tracy Hertsel and Dr. Madison Mick are surrounded by board members and staff as they cut the ribbon of the new Niles Dental facility on Friday, Sept. 26.**

NILES — Cass Family Clinic's Board of Directors celebrated the opening of its new Niles Dental facility with a ribbon cutting and employee reception. The 4,500-square-foot department is in the west wing of its Niles facility, located at 1951 Oak St.

Cass Family Clinic's Niles Dental, which moved two miles from its former location on Grant Street, features 12 treatment rooms and provides a full spectrum of dental services, including hygiene exams, prophy, debridement, sealants, scale and root planning, fillings, extractions, dentures, crowns, root canals, space maintainers, and night guards.

"We're proud to expand our Niles clinic footprint, now offering a fully-integrated and unified healthcare experience under one roof," said Joe Gavan, CEO of Cass Family Clinic. "Bringing a dental center into our Niles clinic helps streamline our services to better care for local residents and patients."

In addition to high-quality dental care, the new dental department includes features not commonly found in other practices, such as a dedicated special needs treatment room and wheelchair-accessible equipment.

"This state-of-the-art lift system will enable patients to receive care directly from their wheelchair, improving both comfort and accessibility," said Dr. Madison Mick, dental director at Cass Family Clinic's Niles Dental. "We are excited to offer this additional level of care for our patients."

With this expansion, Cass Family Clinic has increased its staff to 27 at the newly-constructed dental center. In addition, University of Michigan dental students will receive hands-on experience through a residency rotation program at Cass Family Clinic's Niles and Cassopolis locations.

Barker Nestor Architecture + Design of Chicago designed the new dental space, and Astrong Construction of Niles managed the construction.

# Honor Credit Union announces winners of annual Teacher Awards

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

BERRIEN SPRINGS — Honor Credit Union announced Tuesday its 16th annual Teacher Award winners.

HCU is supporting educators with a total of $20,000 awarded to 40 outstanding teachers across its 28 member center communities.

Originally founded as Berrien Teachers Credit Union 91 years ago, Honor remains committed to giving back and celebrating the invaluable role teachers play in shaping their students and communities.

"I was truly honored and pleasantly surprised to receive this award," said 2025 Teacher Award winner Matthew Orsillo, Band Director at Buchanan Community Schools. "This support means so much, and it will go a long way toward helping me purchase the tools and resources my students need to learn, grow, and succeed in the classroom."

Honor Credit Union extends its congratulations to all the dedicated educators who make a lasting impact on their students and communities.

Listed are the winners from Leader Publications' coverage area:

■ Buchanan Community Schools – Matthew Orsillo

■ Dowagiac Union Schools – Crystal Henninger-Olmstead

■ Niles Community Schools – Makenna Reeves

■ YMCA Niles – Donna Dodge

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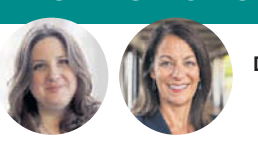
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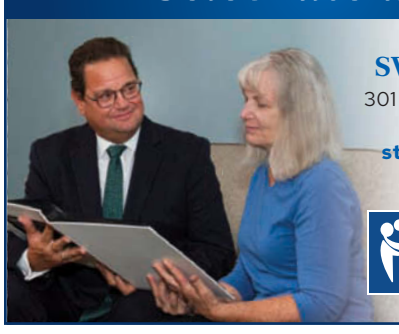
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Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

**Hundreds of people from Edwardsburg and beyond attended the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum's inaugural Sauk Trail Festival Saturday, Sept. 27.**

# Sauk Trail Festival draws hundreds

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

EDWARDSBURG — A local historical group invited the community Saturday to explore and learn more about what life on the historic Sauk Trail looked like.

Hundreds of people from Edwardsburg and beyond attended the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum's inaugural Sauk Trail Festival: Echoes of Our Past.

The free event featured Pokagon Band dancers and drummers in native regalia, presentations by Pokagon Band historian Cecil Wilson and reenactors who demonstrate what life skills were like along the Sauk Trail from the years 1650 to 1750.

"It's a tremendous success," said Museum Vice Chair Barbara Dempsey. "The reenactors are wonderful. What really is wonderful to see is how many people are interacting with the reenactors and actually learning about the history of the French and how they dealt with the Native Americans. We've never done anything this big and it's really wonderful to see this many people out that are actually interested in history."

The event was the first of its kind at the museum and is the result of an in-house committee that has been collaborating for months with several groups, organizations and individuals, including the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, the Sarett Nature Center of Benton Harbor and reenactors from around the area.

"It's really worked out great," said museum member and re-enactor Neil Hassinger. "I don't think I've seen this many at the museum at one time, and we're all excited about this. It's been a long time coming, we've been planning since February."

Several booths occupied the museum grounds, where reenactors gave the public a look at skills and tools for things such as spoon making, carpentry and tools and other objects traded in the 1600s and 1700s. A mockup of two walls showed construction techniques used by the French in the 1700s to build homes, a French woodworker demonstrated spoon making with tools used at the time and a French voyager displayed a miniature version of a voyageur canoe. An archeological dig was also set up for children.

At Pleasant Lake, the public was given rides in the Sarett Nature Center's voyageur canoe to demonstrate what water travel was like more than 400 years ago.

**"What really is wonderful to see is how many people are interacting with the reenactors and actually learning about the history of the French and how they dealt with the Native Americans. We've never done anything this big and it's really wonderful to see this many people out that are actually interested in history."**

**BARBARA DEMPSEY**
Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum vice chair

Individual presenters were featured on the museum's newly renovated back deck, made possible through a grant of more than $2,900 awarded by the Michigan History Center and the Historical Society of Michigan. The grant is provided as part of the planned commemoration of America's 250th birthday in 2026.

The public also experienced the Sauk Trail Display which is exhibited inside the museum until Nov. 1. The Pokagon Band provided all showcase items for the display, including clothes, hand woven baskets and other objects.

Hassinger has been involved with the Fort St. Joseph Archaeology Project in Niles for about 15 years. He was happy to see so many people learn more about local history.

"Our mission is to educate about the area's history and it certainly is doing that," he said. "It is bringing people here that can educate them about that time period.

Dempsey said that the festival's success has given the museum exposure and visibility it has not experienced before.

"It means a lot for the museum because we have a lot here," Dempsey said. "Even though we've told people about it, a lot of people still didn't know where the museum is, so this is kind of a stamp. A lot of people who didn't know where the museum was will know where it is now because of this, so I really see this event as a huge step for the museum in terms of its visibility."

"The festival has really brought in a lot of individuals here, and most people haven't been before," Hassinger added. "That's where we can teach people about local history and what happened in this area."

Dempsey and Hassinger said that a festival is already being planned for next year that will focus on Sauk Trail life in the early 1800s.

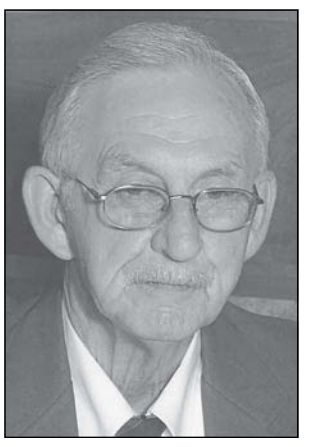
Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

**Hundreds of people from Edwardsburg and beyond attended the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum's inaugural Sauk Trail Festival Saturday, Sept. 27.**

# OBITUARIES

## Roman Irwin Zehner

July 26, 1938 – September 27, 2025



Roman Irwin Zehner, born in St. Joseph, Michigan on July 26, 1938, passed away on September 27, 2025. The son of the late Roman D. Zehner and Margaret Base, Roman lived a life marked by resilience, athleticism, and deep family ties.

A proud graduate of Watervliet High School, Roman made his mark on the football field, earning All-Conference honors and the admiration of teammates and coaches alike. His passion for movement extended beyond the gridiron – he was a graceful roller skater, faithfully gliding across the rink every Saturday, and an avid skier who embraced the thrill of the slopes with joy and vigor.

Roman's life was richly woven with family. He is survived by his former wives, Donna Kay Scott and Rose Zehner, and by his children: daughters Darlene Dillenbeck, Debra Inde, and Deanna (Don) Rolfe; adopted daughter Krystal (Michael) Carpenter; sons Roman W. (Sheila) Zehner and Roger (Paula) Zehner; and stepsons Rick, Terry, Daniel, and Ronald Garrett. His legacy continues through many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren, each a testament to the enduring branches of his family tree.

He was preceded in death by his sisters, Margaret Sexton and Mary Weir, and his brother, Jerry Zehner – beloved siblings who now welcome him home.

Roman will be remembered for his spirited nature, his devotion to family, and the way he embraced life's simple pleasures with enthusiasm. Whether carving down a snowy hill or dancing on wheels beneath the glow of a roller rink, he lived with motion, heart, and purpose.

His story lives on in the memories of those who knew him, loved him, and carry his spirit forward.

Funeral services for Roman will be held at 1:00pm on Monday, October 6, 2025, at Palmer Funeral Homes- Hoven Chapel. Friends and family may visit from 11:00am-1:00pm at the funeral home. Burial will follow at Mission Hills Memorial Gardens.

In keeping with Roman's wishes donations can be made to the American Cancer Society, PO Box 3704, Hagerstown MD 21741. If you would like to leave online condolences for Roman and his family, please visit www.palmerfuneralhomes.com.

## Death notices

**Robin Gail True,** 56, passed away on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

**Michael Edward "Mike" Chamberlain,** 62, of Niles, Michigan, passed away at his home on September 27, 2025. Services have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

**Steven Dodd,** 52, of Dowagiac, passed away from an accident on September 27, 2025. Arrangements are pending and have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com.

**Jerome "Jerry" Price,** 75, of Cassopolis, died September 27, 2025. Arrangements entrusted to Clark Chapel, Dowagiac, (260) 782-2135.

## Rajesh Nakrani

December 6, 1979 – September 27, 2025

It is with heavy hearts and much sadness to let you know about the passing of our son, Rajesh Kumar Nakrani, 45, who died suddenly of natural causes Saturday, September 27, 2025.

His life began December 6, 1979 in Lansing, Michigan, the second of three children born to Khimji and Lori Nakrani.

Rajesh played tuba in Okemos High School, both in the orchestra and the marching band. He continued playing tuba in college in the North Carolina State marching band. In addition to North Carolina State, he attended Pensacola Christian College, Campbell University. Rajesh received a Bachelor degree in computer science which allowed him to pursue his life interest in computer gaming development, eventually working for the Red Storm division of Ubisoft.

Rajesh will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by his parents, Khimji and Lori (Scholten) Nakrani; his brother, Jason Nakrani; and his sister, Jennifer Nakrani.

Family and friends will gather for a memorial service in North Carolina on a date and at a time to be announced.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Rajesh be made to American Diabetes Association, Grand Rapids Office, 1550 East Beltline SE, Suite 250, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

## Jacqueline Smith

March 4, 1951 – September 29, 2025

Jacqueline Jean Smith, 74, of Cassopolis died peacefully Monday, September 29, 2025.

Her life began March 4, 1951, in South Bend, the first of two children born to Daniel and Barbara (Ward) Piekarski.

G-ma Jacque was a devoted grandmother, a constant cheerleader and a source of endless warmth and support. Her greatest joy in life was being in the stands at every sporting event, clapping proudly at school concerts and graduations or packing for the next family vacation. She was always there with a smile on her face and love in her heart. Jacque loved Halloween. She made sure it was a magical time for all her grand-children; full of laughter, memories, and love.

Jacque was also known in the community for her twenty-five years of Thanksgiving dinners that were prepared by her, her kids, her grand-children and family for people in need. She leaves behind a legacy of kindness and unwavering support. Her presence will be deeply missed but forever cherished by all who knew her, especially her grandchildren, who were the light of her life.

Jacqueline will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her daughter, Danielle Lynn Smith; her son, Jason Paul Smith; one sister, Janice Marie Clark of Cassopolis; one brother, John David Merrill of Texas; eight grandchildren, Alyssa Brown, Justin "J.J." Smith, Xander Smith Jamie Smith, Ella Smith, Brooklyn Smith, Lyla Smith, Adara Smith; one great granddaughter, Aria Jayde and several nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents, brother Lloyd "Butch" Merrill, daughter Jamie Lynn Smith, and her arch nemesis/best friend/ex-husband, Jerry Wayne Smith.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Jacque's life by sharing memories and a meal on a date and at a time to be announced.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Jacqueline be made to the family in care of the funeral home to offset funeral expenses.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

## Alice Toney

September 15, 1936 – October 1, 2025

Alice B. Toney, 89, of Dowagiac, passed away peacefully, surrounded by her family, on Wednesday, October 1, 2025 in Edwardsburg, MI. She was born September 15, 1936 in Stone County, Arkansas to Archie and Roxie (Shepherd) Richardson.

The family will receive guests from 10am until the celebration of life service at 11am, Monday, October 6, 2025 at Clark Chapel, 405 Center St., Dowagiac. Pastor Justin Shepard from Michiana Church of Christ, Dowagiac, officiating. Burial to follow at South Wayne Cemetery. Online condolences can be given at www.clarkch.com.

Alice was a talented seamstress, crafter, and cook. But nothing was as impressive as her expansive gardens over the years. She took great pride in her gardening and never missed an opportunity to take her family for "a tour of the garden" before departing her company. She loved her family more than anything, especially her grandchildren and great grandchildren. She lovingly passed down her knowledge of knitting, quilting, crocheting, and canning – something several generations are so thankful for today. Her love language was expressed through the amazing dishes she prepared for her family in her "old fashion southern way," aka "the only way" to cook. And when she wasn't busy creating amazing crafts, playing fun tricks or pranks or preparing delicious food, she enjoyed watching old westerns and shopping for new treasures.

Alice will be missed by her children, Charles "Chuck" (Ruby) Howard, William "Don" Howard, and Rovillie "Frances" Goins; eight grandchildren; 18 great grandchildren; and 14 great, great grandchildren.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Jack Toney, whom she married on September 30, 1977 in Dowagiac; six siblings; and her parents.

# Southwestern Michigan College narrows presidential search to four finalists

**STAFF REPORT**

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College has narrowed its search for its ninth president to four finalists.

The Board of Trustees unanimously approved the slate of finalists at a special public meeting on Sept. 29. The four finalists are Billy Franklin, Dr. Kevin McCaskey, Dr. Klint Pleasant, and Dr. Jonathan Swarts.

The Presidential Search Committee received 128 applications during a six-week period that ended Aug. 17. The committee had previously recommended twelve candidates for interviews.

"The Board is grateful for the unprecedented number of applications received, which is a testament to SMC's unique success and national appeal," said Tom Jerdon, SMC Board Chair.

"It has been an enormous time commitment to review the CVs and conduct the interviews, but we have a great internal team assisting us, which saves substantial costs we didn't have to pay to an outside search firm. The finalists offer a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and leadership qualities that we seek as an institution. We'll look forward to meeting the candidates in person to review their vision for SMC."

The finalists are scheduled to visit campus and be interviewed in a public setting during the week of October 20. Biographical information for the finalists, along with the dates, times, and locations for the interviews, will be released soon.

SMC's eighth president, Dr. Joe Odenwald, resigned in February. Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer Brent Brewer was named Interim President effective May 11. The college is aiming to have a contract with the next president in place by the end of 2025.

Updates on the search process can be found at swmich.edu/presidential-search/.

Stay up to date with the latest news! **www.leaderpub.com**

# OPINION

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Write us

Here's how to submit a letter to the editor:

**Online:** leaderpub.com/services/letters-to-the-editor-submission/

**Email:** news@leaderpub.com

**Regular mail:** Editorial Page, Leader Publications, 25 N. 2nd St., Niles MI 49120

All letters should include a daytime telephone number and street address for verification.

Letters must be 500 words or fewer. Letters relating to candidates and ballot issues in upcoming elections will be limited to 300 words.

Letters must be of general public interest. All letters must be the original work of the authors. Form letters will not be accepted. In most cases, a writer whose letter is published must wait one month before having another letter published.

Leader Publications reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, grammar, inappropriate content and libel.

All letters must be signed by individuals, not groups. Anonymous letters will not be published.

### Vote 'yes' for LMC millage renewals

**Dear Editor,**

Michigan and Southwest Michigan are in a war for talent. The number one issue in economic and community development is our ability to have an educated and top-notch workforce. The recent ranking by SmartAsset, a financial services firm that ranks community colleges, put Lake Michigan College as the top ranked school in Michigan and the 13th best in the United States. That designation signals to people and businesses that this is a great place to invest, to work, and to visit.

As the former President of LMC, I have seen first-hand how Lake Michigan College is connected to the community. For 79 years, LMC has been making a difference, and changing with the times to reflect the needs of residents of Southwest Michigan. Whether it's starting up a Police Academy for law enforcement; creating the first county-wide youth apprenticeship program in Michigan to help retain our young people; or having a top 5 nursing program in Michigan to help care for our citizens, LMC has been there for all of us.

LMC listens as well. The College has two expiring millages in 2026. They are asking for renewal of the operating millage which provides 20 percent of the college's budget. That is vital funding for operations. The rate would not increase for 20 years. The second millage, the capital millage, is being cut in half. It is currently .48 mills on your property tax bill, and the College is asking it to be reduced to .24 mills. LMC has always been fiscally responsible and has the highest credit rating among Michigan community colleges. I applaud LMC for understanding that no one likes property taxes, and their willingness to do more with less. Both deserve a Yes vote. It is important for the future of our community.

Join me in voting Yes by absentee ballot or on November 4th.

**Dr. Bob Harrison**
**Lincoln Township**

### In support of LMC millage renewals

Lake Michigan College is one of our region's greatest assets. Ranked the top community college in Michigan and among the best in the nation, LMC provides affordable education, career training, and transfer opportunities that prepare our students for good-paying jobs and advanced degrees.

For nearly 80 years, LMC has adapted to meet community needs, launching a police academy, expanding apprenticeships, and offering top-ranked nursing and skilled trades programs. This work strengthens both our workforce and our economy.

On November 4, voters can ensure this success continues. LMC is asking to renew its operating millage, unchanged for 20 years and providing 20 percent of its budget, and cut its capital millage in half. That means stable funding for education while lowering property taxes, a fiscally responsible plan that benefits us all.

Please join me in voting YES for both LMC millages. Our community's future depends on it.

**Mark Weber**
**Niles**

## VOTING

From page A1

"I trained over 300 election inspectors here in the county," McMichael said. "I would have to retrain them on that. I can tell you budgets are tight. We can't afford to purchase additional equipment, we have enough already."

Similar to the path Rank MI Vote is following, early voting was passed as part of a ballot measure and implemented across the state in 2022. Loar-Porter said that was a challenge because voter education wasn't a uniform effort.

The Berrien County clerk said she's concerned something similar would happen with the implementation of ranked choice voting.

"Are they going to help us with voter education?" Loar-Porter said. "Will it be explained to everybody the same all over the state? Or is that not going to happen, is it going to be explained better in some areas than others? Then you really are starting to disenfranchise voters because they're not all educated the same."

McMichael said she wants people to recognize the efficacy of the current system.

"The system we have in place works right now," she said. "I don't think we need to add any confusion or any more steps. We had such a huge overhaul of voting and election legislation after 2022. Voters are just now getting used to early voting and changes that were implemented then. Public education is not easy to do."

Ultimately, if it had to be implemented, Loar-Porter said it could be done.

"Berrien County is good at voter education," she said. "We have some amazing clerks that do a great job educating at the local level, so I think if this was to be implemented they would get it done, that's just what we do."

### 'A very simple change'

Rank MI Vote is an organization working to get a ballot initiative to allow ranked choice voting on the November 2026 ballot for state and federal elections. The language of the intended ballot proposal is available at RankMIVote.org/proposal -language.

According to the Rank MI Vote website, ranked choice voting has the benefit of leveling the playing field for third-party candidates, allowing voters to focus on values, forcing candidates to focus more on their constituents and generally making politics more positive.

Rank MI Vote Campaign Director Joe Spaulding said in his experience, voters have found ranked choice voting to be a simple process. He said incorrectly filled ballots happen at the same rate in ranked choice voting elections as they do under the current system.

A Berrien County resident walks past the Harry Gast Atrium to fill out their ballots during early voting in October 2024 at Lake Michigan College's Todd Center. The Rank MI Vote organization is collecting petition signatures for a ballot initiative that would implement ranked choice voting on Michigan ballots if it passes in 2026.

Don Campbell / HP file photo

**"Our research shows that in areas where ranked choice voting is used, more people run for more offices."**

**JOE SPAULDING**
Rank MI Vote campaign director

"Ranking is something people do every day," he said. "If you can list your top five favorite movies, you can rank candidates on a ballot. ... Ranked-choice voting is a very simple change to the way voters encounter their ballots."

Spaulding said it is also important to take into account the impact a change would have on administrators, like the clerks across the state who would be tasked with implementation.

"Our research shows that in areas where ranked choice voting is used, more people run for more offices," he said. "In rural areas especially, when no one runs and a position goes unfilled, those responsibilities also tend to land on clerks."

When it comes to the cost of equipment, Spaulding said the only purchase will be software. Current election equipment, and the statewide hardware upgrades planned for 2028, already accommodate the processing of ranked choice ballots.

Rank MI Vote has collected roughly 100,000 signatures, Spaulding said, on their way to the 500,000-signature threshold to get the initiative on the November 2026 ballot. He said he is "very confident" the threshold will be met because of the determination of the more than 2,000 volunteers out with petitions.

"It's been very exciting watching folks come to this program and get, sometimes for the first time, excited about politics," he said. "The real thing that all of us – Rank MI Vote, clerks, election administrators – are working against here is voter apathy."

### Ranked by state

There is also legislation in the Michigan Senate waiting for action after being passed by House Republicans.

House Bill 4707 would ban ranked choice voting in Michigan. State Rep. Joey Andrews, D-St. Joseph, voted against the bill while state Rep. Pauline Wendzel, R-Watervliet, voted in favor of it. Neither representative could be reached for comment this week.

The bill has now been deferred to the Senate Committee on Elections and Ethics, and would have to pass the state Senate and be signed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer before going into effect.

Two years ago, Kalamazoo, East Lansing and Royal Oak each passed local ballot measures to preemptively authorize the use of ranked choice voting in their local elections. However, the municipalities are not legally allowed to use ranked choice voting unless laws change at the state level.

According to BallotPedia, 17 states have banned ranked choice voting altogether since 2022. The most recent states to do so are Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming in 2025.

All but two of the 17 states passed their bans with a Republican trifecta in control of the state government.

Three states – Alaska, Hawaii and Maine – use ranked choice voting statewide, and 14 states are in the same position as Michigan with localities scheduling the use of RCV in advance of state action. That leaves 16 states with no laws yet addressing ranked choice voting.

Recently, the American Bar Association's Task Force for American Democracy encouraged states to consider whether their circumstances would benefit from employing RCV. "Ranked choice voting thus ensures that the candidate elected enjoys majority support while avoiding the cost, effort and lower turnout associated with holding runoff elections," the report read. "Moreover, by incentivizing candidates to appeal to voters beyond their party's base to win second choice or even their choice votes, ranked choice voting encourages civil discourse and increases campaign civility."

*Contact: lrice@TheHP.com, 932-0360*

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# Cassopolis man gets probation, jail for Dowagiac shooting

**By DEBRA HAIGHT**
For Leader Publications

CASSOPOLIS — Four area residents received jail or probation sentences in Cass County Circuit Court action Friday at the Cass County Law & Courts Building.

One of those sentenced was a 22-year-old Cassopolis man arrested in March for shots fired into a Dowagiac neighborhood.

He pleaded guilty to carrying a concealed weapon and was sentenced to 18 months probation under the Holmes Youthful Training Act, 30 days in jail with credit for eight days served and $2,608 in fines and costs. The charge will be kept off his record if he is successful on probation.

The incident occurred March 15 in the 200 block of East Wayne Street in Dowagiac. Police reported at the time that they responded to the area of East Wayne after getting reports of shots fired. Three shell casings were located and police interviewed residents and reviewed surveillance footage.

Defense attorney Nicholas Hogue noted that the Cassopolis man has no prior record, accepted responsibility for his actions and cooperated with police.

"He has agreed to serve time in jail," he said. "With no prior record, 30 days in jail will likely be life altering."

Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman told the man he should consider himself fortunate that no one was hurt. He pointed out that the Cassopolis man could have been looking at serving nine months to a year in jail in normal circumstances after discharging a firearm.

"Shots were fired because you were having a beef with someone else," he said. "No one fires guns out of a vehicle without reason … All too often young people don't realize that if they do one stupid thing, it can affect the rest of their life … The other thing is that when you shoot at somebody, they might shoot back and you might end up dead."

BEATHEA

FLETCHER

LATSON

REYNA

Two men were sentenced to a year in jail.

Jerry Allen Beathea, Jr., 35, of Vandalia, pleaded guilty to second offense possession of methamphetamine and was sentenced to 365 days in jail with credit for 163 days served and $1,548 in fines and costs. The sentence came as part of a plea agreement between the prosecutor and defense attorney.

The incident occurred July 30, 2020 in Cassopolis. Beathea was stopped for having a loud exhaust and no license. A search of the car found meth.

Assistant Prosecutor Jason Ronning noted that Beathea is facing other charges involving auto theft, weapons and meth and is set for a November trial in Cass County Circuit Court. He also is facing charges in Elkhart County.

"You can see where your lifestyle is taking you," Judge Herman said. "If you don't change, this is what your life will be from here on out … You're still a relatively young man but you're throwing your life away for meth. You need to realize that you will have prison guidelines in the future. Put meth, guns and thievery behind you, have they every done any good for you?"

Travis Devon Fletcher, 31, of Pokagon Street in Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to possession of meth, malicious destruction of police property and resisting and obstructing police-all as a habitual offender and was sentenced to three years probation, 365 days in jail with credit for 231 days served and $3,764 in fines and costs.

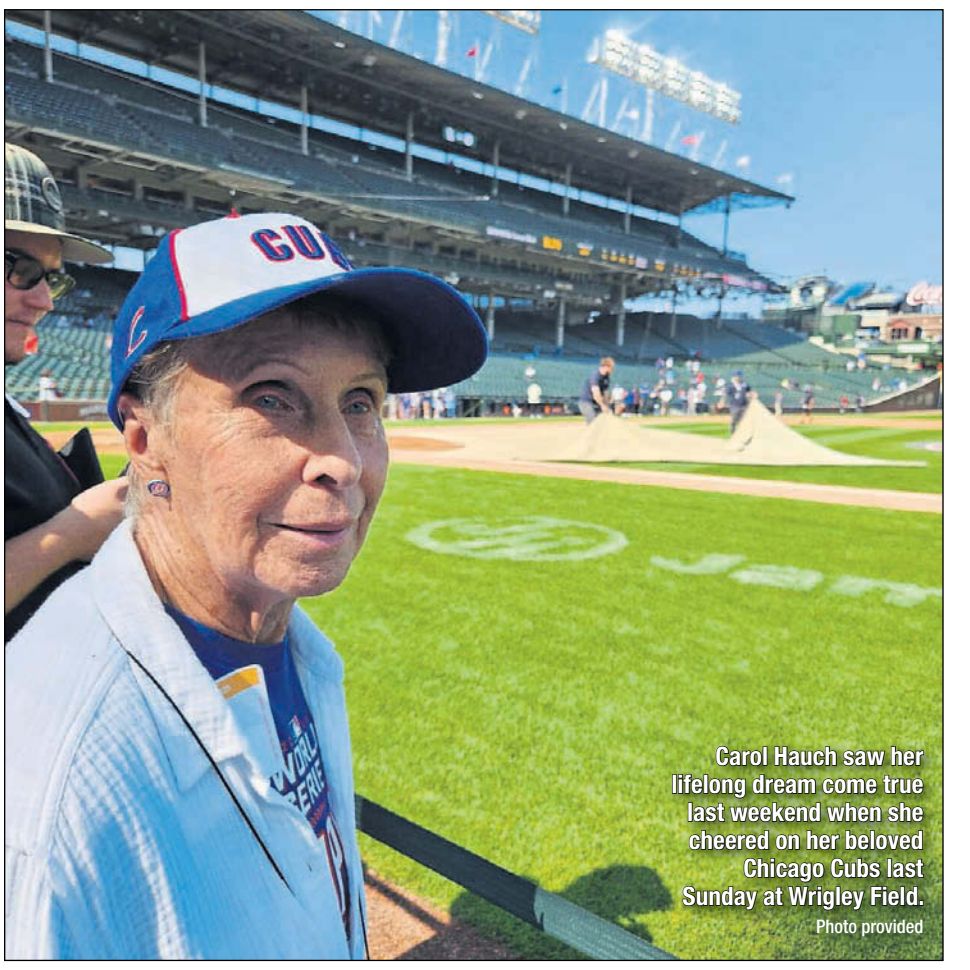
The incident occurred Feb. 8 on North Front Street in Dowagiac. Police were called to the Shell station on reports of Fletcher trespassing. They found knives, meth and marijuana on him before he started resisting police.

"You're 31 years old," Judge Herman said. "When I look at your life, I sentenced you two years ago to a year in jail and little has changed. Here you are back here again … You're a funny nut to crack, you've been before me a number of times. I think there's something good inside you, I think you do have the potential to change your life."

In other sentencings:

Joanne Latson, 66, of Paul Street in Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to use of meth and was sentenced to 12 months probation and $1,835 in fines and costs. The incident occurred June 20, 2023, in Dowagiac.

Robert Reyna, 51 of West Wayne Street in Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to possession of meth and was sentenced to three years probation, completion of the Swift & Sure program, credit for four days served and $2,278 in fines and costs. The incident occurred July 1, 2024, in Dowagiac.


Carol Hauch saw her lifelong dream come true last weekend when she cheered on her beloved Chicago Cubs last Sunday at Wrigley Field.
Photo provided

# Wish of a Lifetime sends Niles woman, 85, to Cubs game

**STAFF REPORT**

NILES — An 85-year-old Niles resident saw her lifelong dream come true last weekend when she cheered on her beloved Chicago Cubs in grand slam fashion at Wrigley Field.

Carol Hauch, a resident of Brentwood at Niles, traveled to Chicago on Sunday, Sept. 28, with her daughter, Karen, and her nephew, Keith, thanks to the nonprofit Wish of a Lifetime. The organization, which fulfills the lifelong dreams of seniors 65 and above, arranged for Hauch to not only watch the game but also enjoy exclusive VIP experiences. This included stepping onto the field, watching the players practice, and taking a special stadium tour.

Hauch was born in Benton Harbor and grew up in the nearby small town of Millburg, where local sports allegiances leaned toward Chicago. Long before streaming, her grandparents would listen to Cubs games on the radio. Later, her family would adjust the TV antenna to catch games on their big box set.

Hauch's career was dedicated to helping others. After her children started school, she began working in a school library. She eventually became a beloved occupational therapist for children with disabilities, a role she took on without formal training but with great compassion.

She married her husband in 1958, and their early life included a period overseas when he was stationed in Germany. At age 21, she became a mother, focusing on her family which spent summers camping, fishing, and playing backyard games.

Baseball was always a family affair for Hauch; she and her late husband, a devoted fan, passed their love for the Cubs down to their children through family outings to the "Friendly Confines." Her daughter, Karen, recalls witnessing a Cubs World Series win with her mother.

Hauch's favorite players include Hall of Famers Ron Santo, Ryne Sandberg and Ernie Banks. She also recalls the legendary voices of Harry Caray and Jack Brickhouse calling the plays. Though her current television no longer carries the games, her love for the team remains strong and her room is decorated with the Cubs hats, shirts, earrings and memorabilia she enjoys so much.

# Niles man killed in 2-vehicle Pokagon Township crash

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

POKAGON TOWNSHIP — A 52-year-old Niles man was killed and a 53-year-old Sault Sainte Marie man was injured Saturday in a two-vehicle crash in Pokagon Township, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 6:44 p.m., deputies from the Cass County Sheriff's Office responded to a fatal, two-vehicle crash at the intersection of M 51 Highway and Crystal Springs Street in Pokagon Township.

Investigation showed that a vehicle being driven by 53-year-old Jonathan Lounds, of Sault Sainte Marie, was traveling south on M-51 when a vehicle driven by 52-year-old Steven Dodd, of Niles, failed to stop at the stop sign at Crystal Springs Street and was struck.

Dodd was pronounced dead at the scene.

Jonathan Lounds was transported by EMS to South Bend Memorial Hospital for non-life-threatening injuries. The passenger of the at fault vehicle, Justin Zeitler (24 years old, of South Bend) was transported by EMS to South Bend Memorial Hospital for non-life-threatening injuries sustained in the crash.

It is unknown if seat belts were worn at the time of the crash.

Assisting Agencies were SMCAS Ambulance, Pokagon Fire, Indian Lake Fire, Michigan State Police, and Pokagon Tribal Police.

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On Thursday, November 13, thousands of volunteers across Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties will come together to help local seniors by raking leaves, bagging them, and cleaning gutters. Rake A Difference is a day dedicated to serving seniors age 60 and older who are physically unable to do their own yard work and cannot afford paid services.
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# SMC grad sets herself up for success

By JOHN EBY
Southwestern Michigan College

DOWAGIAC — After earning an associate degree in social sciences and admission to Phi Theta Kappa in 2015 at Southwestern Michigan College, Cassidy Purucker Bourdon seemed poised for a career in social work.

She transferred from this SMC to the other SMC, Saint Mary's College, from which she graduated in 2017.

"A personal childhood encounter with a social worker" influenced her decision to pursue social work.

"I had the chance to talk to her about my future and how college is an option. She made an impact on my personal life, giving me hope that I could achieve and go anywhere, said Bourdon, who came to SMC from Brandywine High School in Niles. "Since meeting with her in a short period of time, the amount of care and interest she took into my well-being made everything shift. I knew then that this is something I wanted to do for those in similar situations. To give them hope that life can be changed, you can take charge of your life and provide a better outcome no matter the circumstances."

After working as a Registered Behavior Technician with MeBe, a Community Resource Coordinator through Boys Hope Girls Hope and a dog walker/sitter through Rover, Bourdon finds herself in the Bay Area of California as Team Lead and Senior Permit Coordinator at GoPermit, a small six-person niche company in the sign industry.

It started as a sign permit expeditor and branched into construction permits including, but not limited to, interior and exterior build-outs, roofs, parking lots and fences.

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Knowledgeable – 35 years of combined industry experience
2000

Photo provided

Cassidy Purucker Bourdon (third from left) poses with the GoPermit team.

## Signing in in California

"I ended up in this industry due to my best friend from high school who worked in this field," Bourdon said. "I started as an RBT during COVID and just going back-and-forth into people's homes took up a lot of time. I really wanted something different due to some family issues back home that would allow me to travel but still work so I wasn't doing a disservice to the children I was working with.

"She mentioned that they were hiring for someone to work remote. I knew about what she was doing for a while and it piqued my interest because I thought how is there a company that specializes in permitting specifically?

"I told her that I'll apply because I've been very interested in trying to figure out what she does and would be open to considering this as an option for a career path. What we do here at GoPermit is a very niche kind of expertise.

"There are companies throughout the nation that do solely permitting, but most of them work with the national sign companies. So at GoPermit we deal with a lot of bureaucratic paperwork, so we have clients, national companies, come to us asking us. If this proposed sign for a commercial building is allowed specifically we look at the municipal code and cross reference that to the zone they're located in to see if they're allowed to have what they're wanting to propose so, for instance, if you look at Foot Locker, Extra Space Storage or Ross, they have these big signs indicating that this is the store's name, so we help these companies and businesses get that signage on front of their building to help identify.

"So we fill out all the paperwork, do the research on what's allowed, who needs to sign applications, what documents are needed for the submittal and we help see that from start to finish," Bourdon said. "We get everything together, create the package submitted to the city and work with the city to address any comments along the way so our clients can have the proposed sign that they want.

"I deal mainly with the sign permitting as well as the specialized permits for warrants in the City of Miami currently," she said. "At first, when I began working with this company, I had no idea what I was doing. But over the years, you learn the ins and outs of permitting and then it just comes to you naturally as you continuously do it. I never thought that I'd be so passionate about learning and researching several different codes and requirements for each municipality."

## Social work skills still applicable

"The skills I have that transferred over from the community resource coordinator role and my degree as a social worker, I feel like I am able to communicate and provide clarification to the clients, as well as talk them down if something is getting overly addressed or that's super concerning and they need answers immediately," she said. "You have to be very patient and flexible and willing to do anything and everything you can to provide the best possible outcome for your client, and that's what I do here at GoPermit."

Bourdon moved to California in the summer of 2017 for a year of service as community resource coordinator of Boys Hope Girls Hope.

"I located this organization through my social work professor," Bourdon said. "I knew working with children after school and finding them a mentor to help them pursue their dreams would be meaningful."

At GoPermit, "My role is to manage our two permit coordinators by holding weekly all-hands team status meetings and conducting one-on-one meetings with team members to provide feedback and helping unblock permit bottlenecks. I enacted training guides and co-designed internal company systems to promote smooth and structured process-flow for the permitting lifecycle. I plan and execute quarterly employee appreciation events."

She and Buchanan live in the Bay Area, specifically Sunnyvale, so "the wild fires did not affect us here. (Los Angeles) is about six hours south of us. I do not miss snow, but really miss fall. I'm able to get my snow fix during the winter by heading to Tahoe for a few snowboarding trips. I do travel a couple of times a year back to Michigan, mainly around Christmas to spend that with my family and my husband's family."

## A unique proposal

Cassidy's husband of seven years in September programmed an app to propose marriage.

"It was super sweet," she said. "Somehow he managed to hide the app on my phone without me noticing. I answered a few prompts and at the end there was a sweet and meaningful message. I look up crying as he's starting to get down on one knee."

They share their home with three "fur babies. We have a 6-year-old mini-doodle named Finn, an orange 10-year-old tabby named Daisy and recently added a 3-month-old rescue named Polar."

Away from work, she volunteers with a local rescue, Doggie Protective Services (DPS).

"I'm very passionate about animals and do everything I can whether that's driving a few hours to pull dogs from shelters, helping out with adoption events and all the in-between for intake to make sure the dogs are all set and ready for their fosters.

"Besides that, we go hiking, play tennis, love wine tasting at a local winery and during winter we plan a few trips to snowboard."

## 'My decision to attend SMC was very easy'

"Being an RA in White Hall, working on the decorations or doing my best to plan fun hall event for the cohorts" are fond memories. "I enjoyed the community and how easy it was to make friends. I also LOVED working in the office alongside Kathy, Sara and Brenda. The impact we made and the genuine support I received was amazing. I still adore them to this day. I could count on their help navigating what classes would suit best."

"My decision to attend SMC was very easy for me," Bourdon said. "I wanted to stay local and start off where I wasn't as much in debt and touring and talking to the admissions counselor there really helped solidify my decision to wait a couple of years and then transfer to a bigger university.

"I worked closely with the advisor on my game plan to start out on what classes I should take in order to transfer to the other SMC that was also very close to where I live.

"A lot of people when they first start out think they need to go to big-name schools, but you don't have to. You can get a really good education at a local community college which I did for two years, got my associate degree and then transferred to get my bachelor's degree in social work. I set myself up for success by attending SMC and then transferring. Since doing that, I have completely paid off all of my debts."

# Sanitary sewer overflow reported in Dowagiac

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — A sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) of approximately 1,000 gallons of sewage sludge was reported in Dowagiac on Thursday morning due to a mechanical instrument failure.

The overflow occurred within the grounds of the waste water treatment plant and lasted for only one minute, from 9:20 a.m. to 9:21 a.m. While the overflow was primarily contained on the plant's grounds, an estimated 100 to 200 gallons of sludge reached a storm drain.

Officials reported that most of the solids in the drain were captured within a bag and the liquid was successfully removed from the drain.

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# Sports

**Got results?**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

## Dowagiac spikers fall to Berrien Springs in Senior Night thriller

**By SCOTT HASSINGER**
For Leader Publications

DOWAGIAC — Dowagiac's volleyball team took a few minutes following Thursday's Lakeland Conference loss at home to Berrien Springs to reflect on what kind of team they want to be going forward.

Amber Todd's Lady Chieftains lost a tough 25-16, 20-25, 25-23, 23-25, 9-15 decision to the visiting Shamrocks on Senior Night and its annual Pink Game.

The loss dropped Dowagiac to 1-1 in the Lakeland and 12-17-4 overall. Berrien Springs improves to 11-12-4 overall and 1-1 in conference matches.

"We need to work on our consitency and energy on the court. At times we're great and at other times we don't trust our teammates and play together. Those two things are what really hinder us right now as a team. We had a big talk after the match about how some of us are playing and others are down. Our offense was a little inconsistent on where the sets were going. We typically set more consistently and we need to communicate better," Dowagiac's coach said afterwards.

The opening set saw five lead changes before Dowagiac grabbed and maintained the lead for good for the remainder of the game. Senior defensive specialist and setter Claire Hess came off the bench to serve six straight points, including two aces expanding Dowagiac's

See **CHIEFTAINS**, page B2

Scott Hassinger / For Leader Publications
**Riley Todd (14) from Dowagiac reaches out and tips the ball over the net for a point Thursday.**

Tanya Hagen / Leader Correspondent
**Johannah McDonald (83) kicks attempts an extra point against Benton Harbor on Sept. 12.**

## Girls soccer star delivers big kicks for Dowagiac football

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — Johannah McDonald is used to lighting up the scoreboard as one of the area's best soccer players. This fall, the Dowagiac soccer star has traded the pitch for the gridiron.

McDonald is enjoying her first year of varsity football play as the Dowagiac's starting kicker. McDonald, who set the school record for most goals in a season last spring, was approached by assistant football coach Dave Gillesby about kicking for the football team.

"I didn't hear anything until a couple weeks before summer ended, and they were like come and try it and I did and [head coach Duane Davis] was 'okay, you're on the team,'" she said.

"She came out the second week of two-a-days for our scrimmage and kicked a couple through the uprights and I said alright, works for me," Davis said. "Now she's out doing it consistently for us, so it's been a good thing for the whole team."

After years of kicking soccer balls across the field, McDonald said the difference between kicking soccer balls and footballs lies in adjusting one's posture.

"With footballs, you've gotta kick all the way through and then in soccer, I'm used to leaning forward so it doesn't go over the goal," she said. "So now with football, I have to lean back so it goes over the post."

McDonald made her debut Aug. 28 in Dowagiac's season opener, becoming the first girl to score a point for the Chieftains since 2003 when Hillary Bisnett became Dowagiac's first female varsity football player.

"It was really crazy, I was super nervous for the first game," she said. "It was the first time I've ever done this."

McDonald's first-ever field goal completion came against Three Rivers in Week 2 from 25 yards out.

"We sent her out there and we were confident she was confident she put it through the uprights," Davis said. "She's done a good job."

"I was really confused at first because I know they didn't score but he was yelling 'field goal' and I was like okay, I guess that's me. So I went out there and I was just running through all the motions really quickly and I kicked it and went in."

McDonald has made an immediate impact on the team as a dependable placekicker. In Dowagiac's 69-12 win over Benton Harbor on Sept.

See **KICKS**, page B2

## Dowagiac shuts down Brandywine 68-0

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

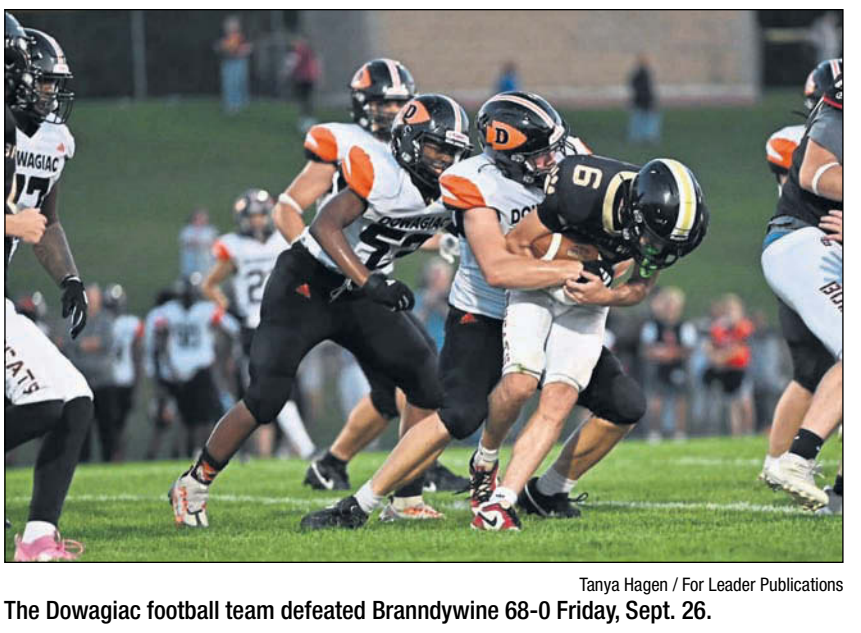
DOWAGIAC — The Dowagiac football team spoiled Brandywine's homecoming with a 68-0 road victory Friday night.

The Chieftains rushed for 378 yards while adding 26 yards through the air. Dowagiac scored a total of nine touchdowns in the game and led 46-0 at halftime.

"We started off slow in the first quarter but we shook it off and found our brand of football late in the first," said head coach Duane Davis. "This was a great team win because everyone was involved and had some impact."

Tim Masterman (22 and 38 yards) and Quentin Hill (25 and 75 yards) had two touchdown runs and Cameron White (four yards), Devin Rock (31 yards), Dionte Calloway (1 yard), Skyler Vincek (40 yards) and Isaiah Weatherspoon (28 yards) added touchdown runs.

Vincek completed 2 of 4 passes for 24 yards.



Tanya Hagen / For Leader Publications
**The Dowagiac football team defeated Branndywine 68-0 Friday, Sept. 26.**

The Dowagiac defense put up a stout performance, holding the Brandywine offense to -11 rushing yards and 40 passing yards. The Chieftains' defense also forced three Brandywine interceptions hauled in by Cooper Szymcek, Rock and Calloway. White forced a fumble and Hill recovered a fumble.

Dowagiac (4-1,2-0) hosts Berrien Springs (3-1,0-1) Friday in a key Lakeland Conference matchup.

## Unbeaten Niles rolls to Wolverine win at Sturgis 49-6

**By SCOTT HASSINGER**
For Leader Publications

STURGIS — Niles took advantage of excellent field position in the first half to build itself a big lead en route to a 49-6 Wolverine Conference football win at Sturgis Friday.

In other league games, Vicksburg handed Three Rivers a 28-24 loss; Edwardsburg held on to edge Otsego 29-26 and Paw Paw shutout Plainwell 39-0.

Powered by its huge offensive line, Niles, now 5-0 overall and 3-0 in the Wolverine, enjoyed a 343-145 advantage over Sturgis in total yardage, including a 327-54 edge on the ground.

Niles' seemingly endless supply of running backs were instrumental in the win as seven different players carried the football. The Vikings were much more physical up front and were able to wear down the Trojans throughout the contest.

"I thought we did some nice things offensively to get on the board early. Offensively we did what we wanted to and never had to punt the ball. I thought we looked good in the first half except we had some mental errors that we have to clean up like jumping offsides and a little misalignment. Those are things we talked about in our pre-game," Niles head coach Scot Shaw said.

Elijah Norris, Niles' 5-foot-9, 170-pound senior tailback. scored the first of his three touchdowns on a one-yard plunge with 9:16 to go in the first quarter for a 6-0 Vikings' lead. Alex Anderson's two-point conversion run failed.

Norris led the powerful Niles' running game with 13 carries for 131 yards and three TDs. Anderson lugged the pigskin eight times while peeling off 89 yards with two TDs. Sophomore fullback Brandon Walsh added seven attempts for 41 yards and one TD.

A fumble recovery by Niles' sophomore Bradley Woolverton at Sturgis' 38-yard line helped set up the Vikings' second score.

Anderson capped off a 38-yard scoring drive with a 15-yard TD scamper that hiked the Vikings' advantage to 12-0 with 5:04 left in the period. Norris' conversion run failed.

After the Vikings' defense had stopped the Trojans on its next series, Walsh sprinted into the Trojans' end zone from four yards out with 1:14 left in the stanza. Anderson's conversion run put the visitors in front 20-0 entering the second quarter.

The Vikings would add a pair of second-quarter scores and extended its lead to 35-0 going into halftime.

Ward Cheney intercepted a Sturgis pass to help set up one of the Vikings' second-period TDs. Norris busted over from three yards out to cap off a 36-yard TD drive with 7:19 left in the half. Freshman quarterback William Turnbull, who completed just one pass, a 11-yard reception to senior tight end Brenden Olsen, ran in a conversion that increased the Niles' lead to 28-0.

Anderson added a 13-yard scoring dash with 1:20 left in the half and senior place kicker Michael Matlock booted the PAT for a 35-0 Vikings' halftime advantage.

Beckett Lamb scored Sturgis' lone TD on a three-yard rushing play with 6:05 left in the third quarter. Mark Adams' PAT failed.

The Vikings scored again on its next series with Norris dashing 54 yards to paydirt with the rock on the second play from scrimmage. His run capped off a 60-yard drive. Matlock added the PAT to extend Niles' lead to 42-6 with 5:08 left in the period.

"It was nice to see Elijah break off a long TD run like that. He's been flirting with it all season. He read the hole correctly then outran everyone. He's got great speed," Shaw said.

Senior halfback Dillon Pearman crashed over Sturgis' goal line from five yards out to score the Vikings' final TD with 6:49 left in the fourth quarter. Matlock added the PAT for the final margin.

See **VIKINGS**, page B2

Scott Hassinger / For Leader Publications
**Niles senior tailback Elijah Norris (24) runs over Hudson Lamb (2) from Sturgis and crosses the goal line for a Vikings' touchdown.**

# Bucks win big Lakeland battle over Shamrocks

## Running game, defense lifts Buchanan 16-13

**By HENRY BRANCH**
For Leader Publications

Ron DeKett / HP Correspondent
**Berrien Springs quarterback Braelin Hurst (10) grinds out a few tough yards as Carson Deming (3) defends for Buchanan during Friday's game.**

BERRIEN SPRINGS — The Buchanan football team triumphed over Berrien Springs Friday night 16-13, behind running backs Max Cornelius and Carson Demming, who combined for 230 yards rushing. On the flip side the Bucks held the Shamrocks to just 72 yards rushing, dominating the line of scrimmage on both sides.

"Any time you can come here and win it's a big one," Buchanan head coach Mark Frey said. "For our guys to withstand those punches this evening, I'm really proud of them."

Berrien Springs (0-1 Lakeland, 3-1) put together a picture perfect opening drive. Quarterback Braelin Hurst found receiver EJ Walker for 28 yards and Walter Williams for 19 yards, setting the Shamrocks up first and goal. Williams then caught a 5-yard pass from Hurst for the game's first score.

Buchanan (2-0, 4-1) responded with a drive into the red zone, but on 4th-and-4 from the Shamrock 14-yard line, quarterback Lucas Zeiger was picked off by Williams.

Both offenses stalled throughout much of the first half. The Shamrocks committed eight first-half penalties for 50 yards, with much of it coming pre-snap.

"That's 100 percent on us," Berrien Springs head coach Ben Illiff said. "We preach a mental game and focus on taking care of the little things. We just did the opposite of that tonight."

Berrien Springs wound up suffering a critical first-half turnover. Logan Edgerle of Buchanan forced a strip sack and Tate Figy recovered. Buchanan took advantage, going on a five-minute drive which led to a Zeiger touchdown run on a fourth down with less than 10 seconds remaining in the half. The Bucks went for two and converted to take an 8-6 lead into halftime.

"We were struggling in the first half making a lot of mental mistakes," Frey said. "For a guy to not let his head drop and just keep going, that was huge out of Logan."

Buchanan tacked on to its lead in the second half. Following a punt which pinned Berrien Springs inside its own 5-yard line, RJ Scoggin sacked Hurst in the end zone, resulting in a safety.

"Defense overall, we knew that they were going to go to Walter, so we just kind of isolated him and double guarded him with a talented group of guys," Frey said.

The Shamrocks' offensive struggles reached their peak in the late stages of the third quarter. Following a 48-yard touchdown run from Hurst that was called back due to a holding penalty, the Shamrocks had a head-scratching communication error, resulting in them punting the ball on first down with about two minutes and change left in the third.

"It was a miscommunication," Iliff said. "There were mistakes for everybody and it starts with me and us coaches. We have to do a better job of making sure the players play better."

All in all the Shamrocks committed 12 penalties for a total of 80 yards.

On the ensuing Buchanan drive, Demming made the Shamrocks pay with a 67-yard touchdown run that gave them a two-possession lead heading into the fourth quarter.

"Carson's big run at the end was huge," Frey said.

Berrien Springs tried to mount a comeback in the late stages of the fourth quarter. Running back Calvin White scored with just under four minutes left in the game. Unfortunately for the Shamrocks it was too little too late, as Buchanan went on a game-sealing drive that drained all the clock away.

"This was one we had circled nine months ago," Frey said. "We prepped for it and we knew this one was going to be a battle. Everyone came out all week strong and here we are."

Outside of Demming and Cornelius, Zeiger added 51 yards rushing while the team totaled 327 rushing yards against a very stout Berrien Springs defense.

The Shamrocks were without linebacker Eli Rospierski, while impact defensive player Darrin O'Dell left the game at halftime.

"Eli is on his way to coming back," Iliff said. "For Darrin hopefully it's just a bump in the road, but we'll have to see as things progress."

The Shamrocks did most of their damage through the air Friday evening. Despite playing behind the sticks throughout the night, Hurst tossed for 195 yards and a touchdown, while rushing for 67 yards. Williams had 71 yards receiving and a touchdown. Sophomore Steven Vazquez had two receptions for 78 yards.

"They (Buchanan) put a lot of guys in the box and we didn't always execute," Iliff said.

## VIKINGS

From page B1

"We have great balance in our backfield. Alex is a good ballcarrier, Vaughn (Asmus) has really improved and we have two good fullbacks with Brandon (Walsh) and Elijah (Norris). We also have other wings we can put in there when we need to. But what really helps is our offensive line. Those guys block well enough that we aren't getting touched sometimes until we are five or six yards downfield," Shaw said.

Shaw was also pleased with the continued development of Turnbull behind center.

"Will is getting better every week and we've kind've simplified things for him. He's seen every stunt known to mankind now and he's handled it very well. He's able to move our offense and I couldn't be more proud of him," Shaw added.

Joel Smith completed 5-of-9 passes for Sturgis, now 0-5 overall and 0-3 in the league, for 91 yards. He also caught three passes worth 78 yards for Sturgis.

Cheney paced Niles defensively with four tackles and one interception. Guy Torres and David Rodriguez added three stops apiece for the Vikings. Brandon Hamilton also had a sack for the Vikings.

"Our defense played pretty well tonight. We gave up one long pass play out on the edge but for the most part they didn't get much else on us. Now we have a big two weeks coming up with games against Three Rivers and Vicksburg," Shaw said.

Niles hosts Three Rivers next Friday at 7 p.m. for the Vikings' annual Homecoming Game.

## CHIEFTAINS

From page B1

advantage to 21-16. The Lady Chieftains ended that game with key kills from sophomore Brianna Campbell and senior Riley Todd.

The second set was tightly contested with neither side leading by more than a couple points. Berrien Springs managed to build a four-point cushion (17-13) late in that game. Dowagiac rallied to even it up at 19-19 with a pair of Hess aces and a Shamrocks' error. But the visitors held on getting two kills each from Kathryn Bergan and Katie Wilson to win the game and even the match at 1-1.

The momentum stayed with Berrien Sorings as the Shamrocks stormed out to a 10-1 lead in the third set. Dowagiac eventually worked its way back and evened the game up at 17-17 on six straight serving points from senior Hanah McCuddy. The Shamrocks clung to 22-20 lead late in that game before the Chieftains pulled within 23-24. But Bergan ended the set with a thunderous kill, evening the match at 2-2 and forcing a fifth set.

Berrien Springs held the lead all the way through the deciding set, including scoring the first four points. Todd's ace pulled Dowagiac within two points, 9-7. That's as close as the Lady Chieftains would get though as Bergan served three consecutive points to put her squad up by four. Zion Ellis' kill for the Shamrocks ended the match.

Dowagiac's coach singled out the play of her junior setter Hess, along with senior hitter Riley Todd.

"I thought Claire did a great job of setting and leading our team tonight when she went in there. We've been working a great deal on short serving and she did a nice job at that in this match. Riley also did an excellent job of executing balls in the first four sets for us and on serve-receive," Dowagiac's coach said.

Carpenter had 13 kills, four aces and one block. Tessa Deering added five kills, 12 digs and one block. Campbell tossed in five kills and five digs. Todd furnished the Chieftains with three aces and nine digs. Ava Nate added four kills and five digs. Hess had four aces, eight digs and 15 assists. McCuddy contributed 20 assists and nine digs. Grace Toy added seven digs. Shivers had 13 digs.

Dowagiac returns to action next Thursday in a non-conference match at South Haven.

Photo provided
**The Edwardsburg boys soccer team secured a Wolverine Conference title Monday.**

# Edwardsburg boys soccer downs Vicksburg to win Wolverine title

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
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EDWARDSBURG — The Edwardsburg boys soccer team defeated Vicksburg 4-1 on Monday to secure the Wolverine Conference title.

The victory pushed the Eddies' overall record to 12-1-1 and their Wolverine Conference record to 5-0-1.

The scoring for Edwardsburg came from four different players: Brayden Fischer (with an assist from Riley Szalai), Maverick Gates (with an assist from Chance Jacobs), Aleck Rodriguez (with an assist from Mobius Stubblefield) and Zach Jacobs.

### Edwardsburg 5, Niles 0

The Eddies defeated Niles 5-0 on Wednesday, improving their impressive record to 13-1-1 overall and 6-0-1 in the Wolverine Conference.

Five different players scored goals for the Eddies: Brayden Fischer (with an assist from Chance Jacobs), Landon Goetz ( with an assist from Riley Szalai), Tyler Petruska (with an assist from Julian Garza), Aleck Rodriguez (with an assist from Austin Leak) and Leak (assisted by Garza).

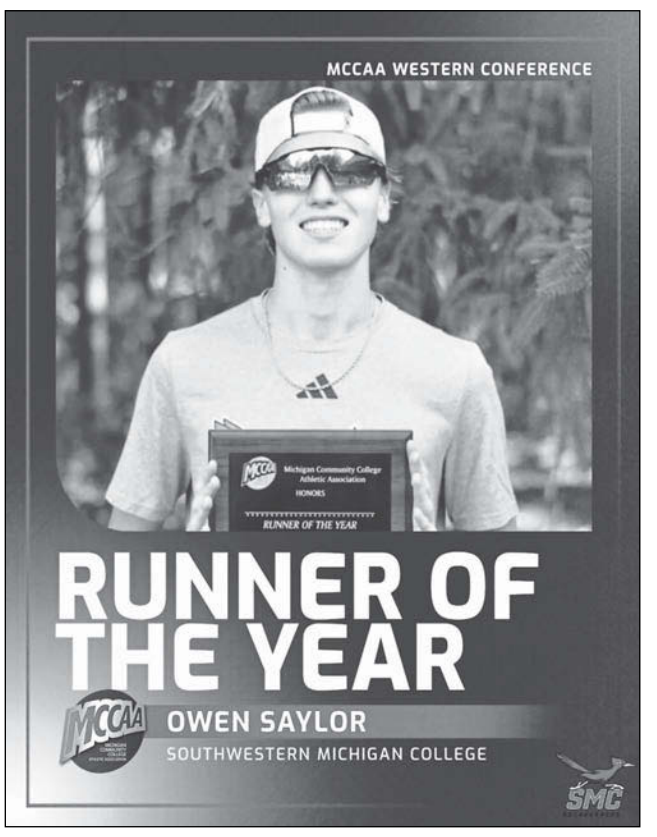
# Saylor named Runner of the Year

DOWAGIAC — The Southwestern Michigan College men's cross country team finished third at the MCCAA Western Conference Championship meet on Friday, Sept. 26, held at Spruce Ridge Golf Club in Dowagiac.

The Roadrunners scored 56 points, finishing behind Lansing (39 points) and Grand Rapids Community College (48 points).

Freshman Owen Saylor led SMC with a time of 27:25.37, placing second overall. Since the first overall finisher competed "unattached," Saylor earned the title of 2025 MCCAA Western Conference Runner of the Year and 2025 MCCAA Western Conference individual champion.

Maguire Johnson finished right behind Saylor in third place with a time of 27:37.55. Zachary Mitchell placed 17th overall, completing the course in 30:02.88.




The Roadrunners will next compete at the Bethel University Invitational at St. Pat's Park in South Bend on Friday, Oct. 10.

# Dowagiac girls golf 3rd, Cassopolis 4th in SAC Championship

**By MAXWELL HARDEN**
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CASSOPOLIS — The Dowagiac and Cassopolis girls golf teams earned top finishes and individual honors at the recent SAC Championship and for the overall season in the Lakeshore Division.

Dowagiac finished in third place out of 12 teams competing at the SAC Championship tournament and Cassopolis fourth. Two Chieftain golfers finished in the top four with Bree Behnke placing second individually with a score of 87 and Jaden Kusch fourth with a score of 93.

Cassopolis' Ava Wagner tied Kusch with a fourth-place score of 94.

In the final standings for the SAC Lakeshore Division, Dowagiac finished second overall in the division. Bree Behnke was named First Team All-Conference and was recognized as the Season Medalist for having the best average score and Jaden Kusch was named First Team All-Conference, ranking third overall while Charlotte Maxey received Honorable Mention.

Cassopolis' Ava Wagoner was named First Team All-Conference, ranking second overall. Brooklyn Smith and Olivia Hayden were both named First Team All-Conference and Alessa Blanchard received Honorable Mention All-Conference recognition.

### Eddies volleyball beats Buchanan

EDWARDSBURG — The Edwardsburg volleyball team defeated Buchanan in three sets on Monday, winning 25-12, 25-15, 25-15. The victory improved the Eddies' overall record to 19-8.

## KICKS

From page B1

12, she converted 9 of 10 extra points, one off the school record of 10 set by Brett Scanlon in 2010 and tying the most extra points made by a female kicker in Michigan since 2019 when Faith Kittleson made nine consecutive extra points for Berrien Springs.

While the Michigan High School Athletic Association only tracks kickers with at least 10 made extra points in a game or nine or more straight, McDonald and Kittelson's nine makes are thought to be the most ever in the state by a girl.

For McDonald, having a short memory has been a key to her success on both the soccer pitch and football field.

"Forget about your mistakes," she said. "[In my first game] I missed a field goal and I was really down on myself but you just gotta forget about it and move on to the next play, the next kick."

While soccer is still her favorite sport, McDonald has a newfound appreciation for football and the camaraderie it creates.

"I feel like the family in football is definitely a lot bigger," she said. "They have a deeper connection than soccer, but I just like soccer more. Football is definitely a good thing and I like that I'm doing it."

Football and soccer may be two different sports but for McDonald, her mindset remains the same no matter what she plays.

"It is pretty similar. I feel like there's more riding on this [as a kicker] because I am the difference between a win and a loss, or I could be, so I feel like there's a little bit more pressure than soccer," she said.

McDonald hopes her play on the field will inspire the next generation of female athletes to follow their dreams.

"If you want to play football, then play football," she said. "Don't let any boys stop you from what you want to do. 'Just because you're a girl, you can't play football.' That's not true."

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## 0900 LEGALS

**STATE OF MICHIGAN**
**PROBATE COURT**
**BERRIEN COUNTY**

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**
**Decedent's Estate**

**CASE NO. and JUDGE**
2025-0642-DE-R

**Court address:**
811 Port Street, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085
**Court phone no.**
269-983-7111

**Estate of** Edward Joseph Cronin, deceased
**Date of birth:** 11/08/1954

**TO ALL CREDITORS: ****

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS:**
The decedent, Edward Joseph Cronin, died 06/02/2024. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Theresa M. Toenjes and Maureen T. Cronin, co-personal representative, or to both the probate court at 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 09/30/2025

**Attorney:** John R. Colip
**Bar no.** P25250
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100
Niles, MI 49120
269-591-6915

Theresa M. Toenjes and Maureen T. Cronin
**Personal representative(s)**
2908 Thrush Lane
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008
1871 Hoopes Street
Alcoa, TX 37701
708-528-4035
874-668-3146

**LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

Notice is hereby given that the Jefferson Township Planning & Zoning Commission will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at 7:00 pm at the Jefferson Township Hall located at 24725 Jefferson Center St, Cassopolis, MI 49031.

The purpose of this hearing is to make a recommendation to amend the zoning ordinance to set maximum size for accessory buildings in RR (Rural Residential Districts) and to set maximum building coverage in all residential districts.

Individuals with disabilities or the need for auxiliary aids should contact the Clerk by phone 269-445-3941 x 7, email clerk@jeffersontownshiponline.org or correspondence to Jefferson Twp., PO Box 188, Cassopolis, MI 49031not less than 5 days before the hearing.

Written comments addressed to the Planning Commission should be received by the Clerk at the Township Hall by email or mail not less than 3 days prior to the public hearing to be included in the written materials submitted for review by the Planning Commission.

Jenny Brunner, Jefferson Township Clerk

**STATE OF MICHIGAN**
**PROBATE COURT**
**CASS COUNTY**

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**
**Decedent's Estate**

**CASE NO.**
2025-184-DE

**Estate of:**
Norma Rose Coquillard, Deceased
**Date of birth:** 06/19/1930

**TO ALL CREDITORS: ***

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**:
The decedent, Norma Rose Coquillard, died 01/20/2024. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to George Boyd, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 1012 N. 5th St. Niles, MI 49120 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

**Date** 09/25/2025

Thomas D. Swisher P37931
**Attorney name** **Bar no.**
213 Pennsylvania Ave, P.O. Box 115
**Address**
Dowagiac, MI 49047
**City, state, zip**
269-783-1609
**Telephone**

George Boyd
**Personal representative**
1012 N. 5th St.
**Address**
Niles, MI 49120
**City, state, zip**
269-684-8752
**Telephone**

**Notice of Public Hearing LaGrange Township Residents To Confirm Special Assessment Roll**
The LaGrange Township Board will conduct a public hearing to review, hear objections to and confirm a special assessment roll reported by the Clerk respecting properties certified by the Cassopolis Area Utilities Authority and the City of Dowagiac as being subject to monthly collection charges which were more than 6 months delinquent as of October 17, 2025.

A copy of said roll is on file with the Township Clerk and is available for inspection by appointment. You may contact the Clerk at (269) 233-4004.

**The hearing will be held October 20, 2025, at 6:45 pm at the LaGrange Township Hall located at 58253 M-62 Hwy, Cassopolis, Michigan. All persons interested may appear and be heard.**

**Abandoned vehicle auction Road Runner towing and recovery October 10, 2025, at 8:30 AM**

**2006 Ford**
Vin 1FTRX12W16KC31125
**2012 Chevrolet**
Vin 1G1ZA5EU6CF360624
**2002 Jeep**
Vin 1J4GL48K82W122781

Contact Road Runner Towing at 269-429-5080 for viewing location & times Monday through Friday 8AM to 5PM Bidding starts at acquired fees and social distancing. Rules still apply.

**White Space Sells**

**STATE OF MICHIGAN**
**PROBATE COURT**
**CASS COUNTY**

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**
**Decedent's Estate**

**CASE NO.**
2025-235-DE
**JUDGE**
Hon. Carol M. Bealor

**Estate of:**
Larry Robert Smith, **deceased**
**Date of birth:** 03/27/1966

**TO ALL CREDITORS: ***

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS:** The decedent, Larry Robert Smith, deceased, died 08/09/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Vickie M. Rose, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

**Date** September 25, 2025

Peter M. Karlowicz P31695
**Attorney name** **Bar no.**
P.O. Box 367
**Address**
Cassopolis, MI 49031
**City, state, zip**
269-445-3871
**Telephone**

Vickie M. Rose
**Personal representative**
311 SE 36th Lane
**Address**
Ocala, Florida 34471
**City, state, zip**
352-615-7137
**Telephone**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
The Niles Housing Commission has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the performance of audit services in the operation of its public housing authority facilities located in the City of Niles, Michigan. All proposals in response to the RFP must be submitted in the format specified in the RFP, which can be downloaded from the City of Niles website at www.nilesmi.org under the "Frequently Requested" tab. Proposals must be submitted on or before October 17, 2025 in accordance with the RFP instructions.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
The Niles Housing Commission has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the performance of management services in the operation of Its public housing authority facilities located in the City of Niles, Michigan. All proposals in response to the RFP must be submitted in the format specified in the RFP, which can be downloaded from the City of Niles website at www.nilesmi.org under the "Frequently Requested" tab. Proposals must be submitted on or before October 17, 2025 in accordance with the RFP instructions.

STATE OF MICHIGAN
IN THE 2nd JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
FOR THE COUNTY OF BERRIEN
CIVIL DIVISION

KATHY KESSINGER
Plaintiff,
v.
GREENTREE ACCEPTANCE CO, INC.
Defendant.

FILE NO. 2023-0210-CH
HON. CHARLES T. LASATA

HEIDI A. DUNCAN (P76168)
DUNCAN & ASSOCIATES, PLLC
Attorney for Plaintiff
107 Pennsylvania Ave.
Dowagiac, MI 49047
(269) 782-9895

GREENTREE ACCEPTANCE CO, INC. and/or Assignee or Agent
Self-Represented Defendant
2505 East Paris SE Ste 200
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

**NOTICE OF HEARING**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that a hearing on Defendant's Motion for the Entry of Default Order Declaring Ownership of Manufactured/Mobile Home is scheduled to be heard in this matter on **Monday, November 3, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.** or as soon thereafter as may be heard before the Honorable Charles T. LaSata with all attorneys and parties participating in person at the Berrien County Courthouse, 811 Port St., Third Floor, Room 316, St. Joseph, MI 49085.

Dated: September 9, 2025

Heidi A. Duncan (P76168)
Attorney for Plaintiff

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65280 M-66
Sturgis, MI 49091

**SAM SCHWARTZ**
**269-221-0159**

**NOTICE OF REGISTRATION FOR THE ELECTION TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY NOVEMBER 4, 2025, POKAGON TOWNSHIP, MI**

**TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF POKAGON TOWNSHIP:**

**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** that any qualified elector of Pokagon Township who is not already registered, may register to vote at the office of the Township Clerk, the office of County Clerk, and a Secretary of State branch office. Registration forms can be obtained at mi.gov/vote and mailed to the Township Clerk. Voters who are already registered may update their registration at www.expressSOS.com.

The last day to register in any manner other than in-person with the local clerk is **Monday, October 20, 2025.**

After this date, anyone who qualifies as an elector may register to vote in person with proof of residency (MCL 168.497) at the Pokagon Township Clerks office, located at 30683 Peavine St, Dowagiac, MI 49047 at the following times:

Regular business hours, call ahead for office hours
Sunday November 2, 2025, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Election Day, Tuesday, November 4, 2025, form 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** the following proposals will be on the ballot:
**MEDICAL CARE FACILITY:** County of Cass Medical Care Facility Millage Renewal .4881mills for 10 years.
**DOWAGIAC SCHOOLS:** Dowagiac Union School District sinking fund millage proposal .5 mill for 10 years

Full text of the ballot proposal may be obtained at the Pokagon Township Clerk's office, 30683 Peavine St. Dowagiac, MI 49047, phone: 269-782-8756. A sample ballot may be viewed at mi.gov/vote.

Persons with disabilities needing accommodations should contact the clerk's office.

Christina Davis, Pokagon Township Clerk

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on November 5, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information: Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Brittany Crane, an unmarried woman Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Freedom Mortgage Corporation
Date of Mortgage: November 22, 2024
Date of Mortgage Recording: December 2, 2024
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $116,296.50
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Village of Cassopolis, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: Commencing on the Northeast corner of Lot Number 12, Block 3 South, Range 4 East, Altered Plat of the Village of Cassopolis, according to the recorded plat thereof, thence running South along the East line of said Lot Number 12, 3 1/2 rods; thence running West 6 rods, more or less, to the East line of property formerly owned by Henry Klinkman; thence running North on the East line of said Henry Klinkman's property to the North line of Lot Number 11 in said Block and Range; thence running East along the North line of said Lots Numbered 11 and 12 to the place of beginning.
Common street address (if any): 324 S East St, Cassopolis, MI 49031-1204
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16). If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: October 4, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
1572952 (248) 642-2515
(10-04)(10-25)

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, Michigan starting promptly at 10:00 a.m. on November 5, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Mortgage (the "Mortgage") made by Patrick J. Brodzinski, a single man, as Mortgagor to First Federal Savings Bank, with its address at 301 East Ninth Street, Rochester, IN, 46975-0527 as Mortgagee, dated February 13, 2009, and recorded February 24, 2009, Liber 989, Page 2381, Cass County Records, Cass County, Michigan. The balance owing on the Mortgage is $47,662.36 at the time of this Notice. The Mortgage contains a power of sale and no suit or proceeding at law or in equity has been instituted to recover the debt secured by the Mortgage, or any part of the Mortgage. TAKE NOTICE that on Wednesday, November 5, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. local time, or any adjourned date thereafter, the Mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale at public auction to the highest bidder, at the Cass County Courthouse located at 60296 M 62, Cassopolis, Michigan. The Mortgagee will apply the sale proceeds to the debt secured by the Mortgage as stated above, plus interest on the amount due at the fixed rate of 5%per annum; all legal costs and expenses, including attorney fees allowed by law; and also any amount paid by the Mortgagee to protect its interest in the property. The property to be sold at foreclosure is all of that real estate situated in Milton Township, County of Cass, State of Michigan, described as: LOT NUMBERED FIVE (5), DUNNING ACRES, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF, AS RECORDED IN LIBER 16 OF PLATS, PAGE 333, CASS COUNTY RECORDS. PATRICK J. BRODZINSKI AND PATRICK JOHN BRODZINSKI ARE ONE AND THE SAME PERSON. Parcel No. 14-070-300-005-00 Commonly known address: 29154 E. US 12, Niles, Michigan 49120 The redemption period shall be one (1) year from the date of sale pursuant to MCLA 600.3240(12), unless deemed abandoned and then pursuant to the time frames provided for in MCL 600.3241a. Pursuant to MCL 600.3278, Mortgagor will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. September 15, 2025 First Federal Savings Bank PLUNKETT COONEY KELLI L. BAKER (P49960) Attorney for Mortgagee 333 Bridge Street NW, Suite 530 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504 (616) 752-4624
(09-27)(10-25)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on November 5, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Ray Bloomer, an unmarried man
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): PennyMac Loan Services, LLC
Date of Mortgage: November 22, 2017
Date of Mortgage Recording: December 7, 2017
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $95,859.63
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Wayne, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: Commencing North 1127.28 feet from the Southeast corner of the North Three Quarters of the East Half of the East Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 22, Township 5 South, Range 15 West; thence West 436.14 feet; thence South 277.28 feet; thence East 436.14 feet; thence North 277.28 feet to beginning.
Common street address (if any): 53702 Glenwood Rd, Dowagiac, MI 49047-7423
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: October 4, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145, Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1573260 (10-04)(10-25)

FORECLOSURE NOTICE (ALL COUNTIES) AS A DEBT COLLECTOR, WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: IF YOU ARE A MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER ON ACTIVE DUTY, IF YOUR PERIOD OF ACTIVE DUTY HAS CONCLUDED LESS THAN 90 DAYS AGO, OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY, PLEASE CONTACT THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PARTY FORECLOSING THE MORTGAGE AT THE TELEPHONE NUMBER STATED IN THIS NOTICE. Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement – Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM a.m./p.m. on October 22, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default having been made in the terms and conditions of a certain mortgage made by Samuel L. Butler and Brenda Butler of Cass County, Michigan, Mortgagor to Fifth Third Bank (Western Michigan) dated the 7th day of February, 2005, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds, for the County of Cass and State of Michigan, on the 4th day of March, 2005, Liber 00905, Page 0596, of the Cass County Records on which mortgage there is claimed to be due, at the date of this notice, for principal of $127,657.11 plus accrued interest at 8.00000% percent per annum. Which said premises are described as follows: All that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Township of Volinia, in the County of Cass and State of Michigan and described as follows to wit: Part of the Northwest fractional Quarter of Section 19, Town 5 South, Range 14 West, described as commencing at the North Quarter post of said Section; thence West along the North line of said Section 493.66 feet to the Point of Beginning of the land herein described; thence South at right angles to the North line, 600.00 feet; thence West parallel with the North line of said Section, +/- 160 feet to the West line of the East half of the Northeast Quarter of said Northwest Quarter; thence Northerly along said West line +/- 600 feet to the North line of said Section 19; thence East along said North line, 160.00 feet to the Place of Beginning. ALSO, the East half of the Northeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 19, Town 5 South, Range 14 West. More correctly described as: The East half of the Northeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 19, Town 5 South, Range 14 West. Commonly known as: 21515 Crane Street, Dowagiac, MI 49047 Tax ID: 14-140-019-007-02 and 14-140-019-007-11 If the property is sold at a foreclosure sale the borrower, pursuant to MCLA 600.3278 will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. The redemption period shall be six months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. Dated: September 20, 2025, By: Benjamin N. Hoen #P-81415 Weltman, Weinberg & Reis Co., L.P.A. 5990 West Creek Road, Suite 200 Independence, OH 44131 Telephone: 216-739-5100 Fax: 216-363-4034 Email: bhoen@weltman.com WWR# 25-000793-1 (09-20)(10-11)

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE BY ADVERTISEMENT

Notice is given under Section 3212 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following Mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the Circuit Court in Cass County, Law and Courts Building 60296 M-62 Cassopolis, MI 49031 starting promptly at **10:00 a.m., Wednesday October 22, 2025.** The amount due on the Mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.

Default has been made in the conditions of a Mortgage by Dale A. Wetzel, the original mortgagor, to Honor Credit Union, Mortgagee, dated July 21, 2023, and recorded on August 04, 2023, in Liber 1235 on Page 1550, in Cass County, Michigan Records, on which Mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of $55,896.81, including interest at 7.25% per annum. Said premises is situated in the County of Cass, State of Michigan, and described as:

Real Estate Located in the Township of Pokagon, County of Cass, State of Michigan and described as:
Lot Three (3), and the West One- Half of Lot Two (2), Block Eleven (11), Village of Summerville, Pokagon Township, Cass County, Michigan, according to the Plat
thereof, recorded at Liber A of Mortgages, Page 190, on August 22, 1836.
TAX ID: 14-110-140-113-00
Commonly known as: 33037 Pokagon Hwy, Niles, Michigan 49120

The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.

ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this Notice.

THIS FIRM IS A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION WE OBTAIN WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

Date: September 16, 2025

**For more information, please call:**
HONOR CREDIT UNION
Mark D. Hofstee (P66001)
Bolhouse, Hofstee & McLean, P.C.
Grandville State Bank Building
3996 Chicago Dr SW, Grandville MI 49418-1384

**Looking for supplemental income?**

Leader Publications is looking for
home delivery route carriers
in the Dowagiac and Niles areas.
Please call 269-429-1877 for more information.

Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.

Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on NOVEMBER 19, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.

Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Michael Antisdel and Sherry Antisdel, husband and wife, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for First NLC Financial Services, LLC, Mortgagee, dated November 16, 2006, and recorded December 15, 2006, in Liber 950, Page 1099 Cass County Records, Michigan. Said mortgage is now held by Deutsche Bank National Trust Company, as Trustee, in trust for the registered holders of Morgan Stanley Home Equity Loan Trust 2007-2, Mortgage Pass-Through Certificates, Series 2007-2, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of Ninety-Seven Thousand Seven Hundred Eleven and 60/100 Dollars ($97,711.60).

Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue at the place of holding the circuit court within Cass County, Michigan at 10:00 AM on NOVEMBER 19, 2025.

Said premises are located in the Township of Howard, Cass County Michigan, and are described as:
Parcel 1: Commencing on the East Line of Thomson Road 975 feet North and 33 feet East of the Southwest corner of the East 1/2 of the Southeast 1/4; thence East 298.61 feet; thence North 75 feet West 298.50 feet; thence South 75 feet to the beginning. Parcel 2: Commencing on the East line of Thomson Road 900 feet North and 33 feet East of the Southwest corner of the East 1/2 of the Southeast 1/4; thence East 628.52 feet; thence North 150 feet; thence West 329.80 feet; thence South 75 feet; thence West 298.61 feet; thence South 75 feet to beginning.
1235 Thomson Road, Niles, Michigan 49120.

The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale.

If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period.
Dated: October 4, 2025
File No. 25-012467
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400
(10-04)(10-25)

**CALVIN TOWNSHIP CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN DIAMOND LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (AQUATIC VEGETATION CONTROL) NOTICE OF OCTOBER 14, 2025 PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL**

TO: THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF CALVIN, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN; OWNERS OF ALL LOTS/PARCELS WITH FRONTAGE TO AND BACK LOTS ON DIAMOND; AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS:
**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** the Assessing Officer of Calvin Township has reported to the Township Board and filed in the office of the Township Clerk for public examination a proposed special assessment roll/ special assessment column in the regular tax roll pertaining to the 2025 Diamond Lake Improvement Project Special Assessment District (Aquatic Vegetation Control) created by the Township Board at a public hearing/meeting on September 9, 2025.

The proposed special assessment roll in the Township proposes to allocate the Township's portion of the costs of a five-year aquatic vegetation control program (2025 – 2029) in the approximate total amount of $7,874.00 over the five-year program to the lake lots within the district. The amount proposed to be assessed against each lake lot in the district is $62.00 per lake lot and $31.00 for back lots on Diamond Lake.

Because the costs for the aquatic vegetation control program may vary from year to year based on the effectiveness of the prior year's treatment program, and other variables, a redetermination of costs may be necessary on an annual basis, without change in the special assessment district boundaries. The annual assessments for years 2025-2029 are therefore subject to redetermination by the Township Board on a yearly basis when the actual costs of the yearly treatment and any related administrative costs are known. Any such annual redetermination as may be necessary will be made by October or November of 2025 – 2029 without further public hearing or notice, except as may be required by law or as may be further determined by the Township Board; providing that in any such instance the allocation of individual special assessments resulting from an annual redetermination shall be based on the same proportional allocation of costs used for the initial assessment of $62.00.

A public hearing on any objections to the proposed special assessment roll in the township will be held at the Calvin Township Hall, located at 18727 Mt Zion, Cassopolis, Michigan in conjunction with the regular board meeting of the township on Tuesday, October 14, 2025, at 5:45.

The proposed special assessment roll (and the current project plans, estimate of costs, the Special Assessment District boundaries and the resolution of the Township Board creating the Special Assessment District and directing the Assessing Officer of the Township to make the proposed special assessment roll) may be examined at the office of the Township Clerk and may further be examined at the public hearing.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE THAT APPEARANCE AND PROTEST AT THIS HEARING IS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO APPEAL THE AMOUNT OF A SPECIAL ASSESSMENT TO THE MICHIGAN TAX TRIBUNAL. AN OWNER OR PARTY IN INTEREST OR HIS OR HER AGENT MAY APPEAR IN PERSON AT THIS HEARING TO PROTEST A SPECIAL ASSESSMENT, OR MAY FILE AN APPEARANCE OR PROTEST BY LETTER WITH THE TOWNSHIP CLERK BEFORE THE CLOSE OF THE HEARING OR WITHIN SUCH FURTHER TIME AS THE TOWNSHIP BOARD MAY GRANT, IF ANY, AND IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES A PERSONAL APPEARANCE AT THE HEARING SHALL NOT BE REQUIRED. THE OWNER OR ANY PERSON HAVING AN INTEREST IN THE REAL PROPERTY WHO PROTESTS IN PERSON OR IN WRITING AS PROVIDED ABOVE MAY FILE A WRITTEN APPEAL OF A SPECIAL ASSESSMENT WITH THE MICHIGAN TAX TRIBUNAL WITHIN 35 DAYS AFTER THE CONFIRMATION OF THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL.

The hearing, and all proceedings associated with these special assessment matters will be conducted in accordance with and pursuant to 1954 PA 188, as amended, the Michigan Open Meetings Act, and any other applicable law.

Michelle Anderson, Calvin Township Clerk

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
POKAGON TOWNSHIP
CASS COUNTY**

**AMBULANCE SERVICES SPECIAL ASSESSMENT**

**TO: ALL RECORD OWNERS OF OR PARTIES IN INTEREST IN LAND IN THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT DESCRIBED BELOW:**

**WHEREAS** Pokagon Township has an existing special assessment district pursuant to MCL 333.20948 and Public Act 33 of 1951 for ambulance service within Sections 1-24 of the Township known as the North Ambulance Special Assessment District. The district's boundaries are:

ALL OCCUPIED PARCELS WITHIN SECTIONS 1-24 OF THE TOWNSHIP

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the annual public hearing on the cost estimate and assessment roll for the Pokagon Township North Ambulance Special Assessment District will be held on October 8th, 2025, commencing at 7:300 pm., at the Township Hall, 30683 Peavine Street, Dowagiac, MI 49047. At the public hearing, the Township Board will hear and consider any objections to the proposed cost estimate and assessment roll and may confirm or amend the special assessment roll for 2026. A copy of the cost estimate and assessment roll is on file with the Township Clerk and may be inspected at the Township Hall during regular business hours.

**NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN** that the Township proposes to increase the annual assessment from $20.00 per occupied parcel to an annual assessment of $88.00 per occupied parcel, beginning with the Winter 2025 levy.

**PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE** that the owner or any person having an interest in property within the special assessment district may file a written appeal with the Michigan Tax Tribunal within thirty (30) days after confirmation of the special assessment roll. Appearance and protest at the public hearing on the special assessment roll are required in order to appeal the special assessment to the Michigan Tax Tribunal. An owner or other party of interest or his or her agent may (1) appear in person at the hearing to protest the special assessment, or (2) file his or her appearance or protest by letter before the close of the hearing using the address below.

The Township Board shall maintain a record of parties who appear to protest at the hearing. If the hearing is terminated or adjourned for the day before a party is provided the opportunity to be heard, a party whose appearance was recorded shall be considered to have protested the special assessment in person.

Pokagon Township will make accommodations to individuals with disabilities. Persons needing accommodations should contact the Township Clerk at the phone number below not less than four (4) days before the public hearing.

**POKAGON TOWNSHIP**
Christina Davis, Clerk
30683 Peavine Street
Dowagiac, MI 49047
Phone: (269) 782-8756

**PENN TOWNSHIP CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN DIAMOND LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (AQUATIC VEGETATION CONTROL) NOTICE OF OCTOBER 13, 2025 PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL**

TO: THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF PENN, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN; OWNERS OF ALL LOTS/PARCELS WITH FRONTAGE TO DIAMOND LAKE; AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE the Assessing Officer of Penn Township has reported to the Township Board and filed in the office of the Township Clerk for public examination a proposed special assessment roll / special assessment column in the regular tax roll pertaining to the 2025 Diamond Lake Improvement Project Special Assessment District (Aquatic Vegetation Control) created by the Township Board at a public hearing / meeting on September 8, 2025.

The proposed special assessment roll in the Township proposes to allocate the Township's portion of the costs of a five-year aquatic vegetation control program (2026-2030) in the approximate total amount of$29,636.00 over the five-year program to the lake lots within the district. The amount proposed to be assessed against each lake lot in the district is $62.00 per lake lot and $31.00 per back lot on Diamond Lake.

Because the costs for the aquatic vegetation control program may vary from year to year based on the effectiveness of the prior year's treatment program, and other variables, a redetermination of costs may be necessary on an annual basis, without change in the special assessment district boundaries. The annual assessments for years 2026-2030 are therefore subject to redetermination by the Township Board on a yearly basis when the actual costs of the yearly treatment and any related administrative costs are known. Any such annual redetermination as may be necessary will be made by October or November of 2026-2030 without further public hearing or notice, except as may be required by law or as may be further determined by the Township Board; providing that in any such instance the allocation of individual special assessments resulting from an annual redetermination shall be based on the same proportional allocation of costs used for the initial assessment of $62.00 for lake front lots and $31.00 for back lots.

A public hearing on any objections to the proposed special assessment roll in the township will be held at the Penn Township Hall, located at 60717 South Main Street, Vandalia, Michigan in conjunction with the regular board meeting of the township on Monday, October 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

The proposed special assessment roll (and the current project plans, estimate of costs, the Special Assessment District boundaries and the resolution of the Township Board creating the Special Assessment District and directing the Assessing Officer of the Township to make the proposed special assessment roll) may be examined at the office of the Township Clerk and may further be examined at the public hearing.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE THAT APPEARANCE AND PROTEST AT THIS HEARING IS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO APPEAL THE AMOUNT OF A SPECIAL ASSESSMENT TO THE MICHIGAN TAX TRIBUNAL. AN OWNER OR PARTY IN INTEREST OR HIS OR HER AGENT MAY APPEAR IN PERSON AT THE HEARING TO PROTEST A SPECIAL ASSESSMENT, OR MAY FILE AN APPEARANCE OR PROTEST BY LETTER WITH THE TOWNSHIP CLERK BEFORE THE CLOSE OF AND IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES A PERSONAL APPEARANCE AT THE HEARING SHALL NOT BE REQUIRED. THE OWNER OR ANY PERSON HAVING AN INTEREST IN THE REAL PROPERTY WHO PROTESTS IN PERSON OR IN WRITING AS PROVIDED ABOVE MAY FILE A WRITTEN APPEAL OF A SPECIAL ASSESSMENT WITH THE MICHIGAN TAX TRIBUNAL WITHIN 35 DAYS AFTER THE CONFIRMATION OF THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL.

The hearing, and all proceedings associated with these special assessment matters will be conducted in accordance with and pursuant to 1954 PA 188, as amended, the Michigan Open Meetings Act, and any other applicable law.

Rhonda Barnett, Penn Township Clerk

# OUTDOORS

## Merlin passes through on way south

On Sept. 15, Brad Anderson captured the image of a merlin, as it sat atop a dead branch of a cottonwood tree in Warren Dunes State Park. This was almost certainly a migrant heading towards its winter range, which extends from the Deep South and the Great Plains south through Mexico and northern South America.

**Jonathan Wuepper**
Southwest Michigan Wildlife

The merlin is a species of falcon which, as of about 30 years ago, nested across Canada south into the Upper Peninsula and extreme northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. Over the last three decades, merlins have spread their breeding range both southward and farther east into the southern Lower Peninsula of Michigan and surrounding states.

The merlin is one of three species of falcon that occur in Southwest Michigan. The others are the American kestrel and peregrine falcon. Recent studies of falcon DNA indicate they are more closely related to passerine (perching birds) than other raptors.

The merlin in the photo captured by Anderson is an adult male, as indicated by the dark blue coloration across its upper wings and back. In contrast, adult females are chocolate brown.

In Berrien County, merlins that nested further to our north arrive in mid-September, although they may be seen as early as August. Fall migration of the merlin generally peaks in late September. Merlins may be found sparingly through the winter in Berrien County. Spring migrants generally appear locally during April, with peak numbers occurring from April 20 through May 10.

Rick Myers of Royalton Township submitted nice photos of a Cooper's hawk, taken Sept. 19 when it was after a small rodent.

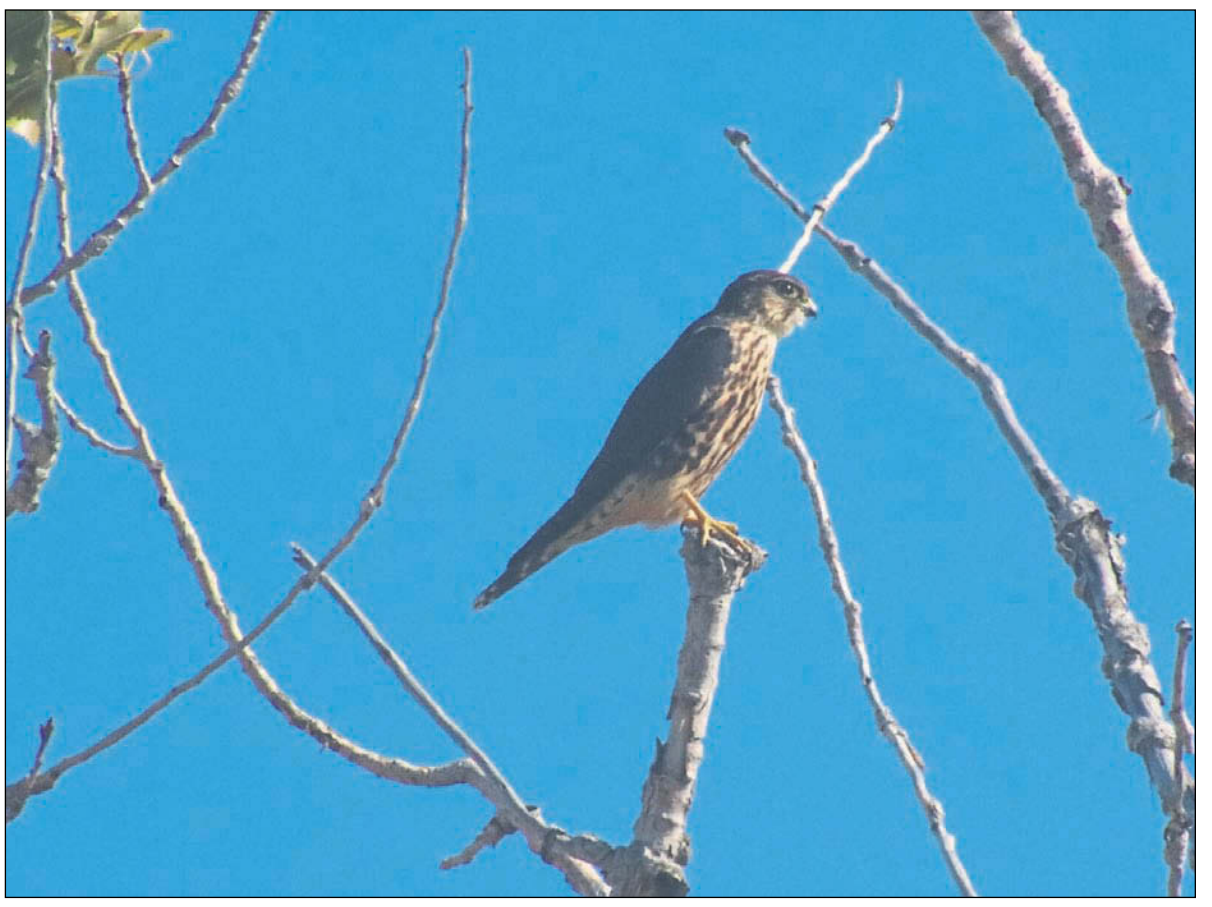

Photo provided / Brad Anderson

**A merlin on Sept. 15 at Warren Dunes State Park.**

Photo provided / Rick Myers

**A Cooper's hawk after a rodent on Sept. 19 in Royalton Twp.**

Photo provided / Brad Anderson

**A ruby-throated hummingbird on Aug. 25 in Bridgman.**

Cooper's hawks are summer residents in the Upper Peninsula and year-round residents throughout the Lower Peninsula of Michigan and surrounding states. From about November through April, our local Cooper's hawk population increases when birds that nested north of us visit for the winter.

Cooper's hawks specialize in flying through wooded areas, but can also be seen over open country. In winter they may be seen around bird feeding stations, where they prey on small mammals and birds.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds become uncommon in Southwest Michigan during October. Our resident nesting birds have gone south and only late migrants are seen locally during October.

Those with hummingbird feeders should look out for species of hummingbirds other than our ruby-throated. Occasionally a species such as a rufous hummingbird, common out west, will turn up at a local feeder during October or November.

*Jonathan Wuepper is an area naturalist. Report your sightings to him at wuepperj@gmail.com*

### Sarett Nature Center

**Sarett Nature Stewards:** 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. For ages 10 and older.

**Paddles & Pints:** 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Oct. 5. Meet at Sarett to travel to the New Buffalo boat launch where we will paddle to the Galien River County Park. Afterwards we will stop at Ghost Isle Brewery where we will continue to enjoy the marsh while drinking a pint of beer. We will provide the kayak, paddle, PFD, and naturalist expertise. Please call (269) 927-4832 to register. Members $30, non-members $35. (Have your own equipment? Not a problem, just let us know when you sign up. Members $15, non-members $20.) The first pint is on us. Ages 21 and up.

### Warren Dunes State Park

**Volunteer Stewardship Workday:** 10 a.m.-noon Oct. 4. Meet at the first roadside parking lot on the way to the beach. Help keep our dunes free of invasive plants. Volunteers will help remove unwanted plants from the park before they spread to the high dunes. No experience is necessary; volunteers will be trained to identify target species.

*Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Wednesday.*

## Birding by ear

### How to learn the songs of nature's symphony with some simple techniques

**By CHRIS LITUMA**
West Virginia University (The Conversation)

Waking up to the dawn chorus of birds – one of the natural world's greatest symphonies – is a joy like no other. It is not surprising that bird-watching has become an increasingly popular hobby.

A simple way to start bird-watching is to buy a feeder, a pair of binoculars and a field guide, and begin watching birds from your window.

However, one of the most rewarding ways to identify birds is to listen to them and learn to recognize their songs.

As an ornithologist and educator, I often introduce students to the intricacies of bird songs, and I have developed some tricks that can make birding by ear less daunting.

#### Learning to listen

Learning bird songs is the difference between "hearing" and "listening."

Listening requires full attention and limiting distractions. It means using your ears to pick up different patterns in the sounds that birds make. Every person has the capacity to listen and learn patterns in sound.

If I were to sing "da-da-da-DUM" most people would immediately recognize it as Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. Alternatively, if I were to play the first few notes or beats of your favorite song, I'm certain you would know what it was and who sang it.

The ability to recognize bird songs uses the same part of the brain you use to recognize songs on the radio – the supratemporal, or auditory, cortex, an area just above the ears where your brain processes language and sound.

When you're birding by ear, you use the same skills as when you're recognizing music; listening to sounds, patterns, changes in pitch, in tone and in volume, but in nature rather than in music.

You can do this.

To begin learning to recognize bird songs, select two to three common bird songs that you hear frequently around your neighborhood.

Sometimes there are mnemonics that you can use to help remember the songs. For instance, the tufted titmouse says "peter, peter, peter" over and over. Sometimes it sings it fast, sometimes slow, but always "peter, peter, peter." Whereas the Carolina wren says, "tea kettle, tea kettle, tea kettle".

Songbirds aren't the only birds with helpful mnemonics. Next time you hear a hooting sound, if it sounds like "who cooks for you, who cooks for you all," that's a barred owl.

#### Why and how songbirds sing

Watching the actual bird sing its song is one of the best ways to learn the bird and song together. Find a tufted titmouse and watch it sing "peter, peter, peter," and you will remember it forever.

Try going out into the woods with your binoculars and following unfamiliar sounds.

Many species make unique sounds as they sing, chirp, hoot, screech or whistle. They vocalize like this for a variety of reasons – to attract a mate, defend a territory, alert other birds to threats, or to locate other individuals to form flocks or groups.

Songbirds, such as the tufted titmouse and northern cardinal, are the group that ornithologists associate most with complex songs. They tend to have multiple notes and patterns that change in pitch and speed, rather than simple one-note or two-note calls.

These birds have a unique voice box called the syrinx, which translates to "double flute" in Greek and allows them to create two sounds at once.

Birds learn their songs in multiple ways.

Songbirds are born with an innate "template," which tells them the basics for the song to sing. But they also learn from listening to adults. Studies have found regional dialects of birds' songs and evidence that some birds learn songs from their parents while still in the shell. Sometimes they learn songs from neighbors, who usually end up becoming competitors for territory.

#### Human activities can affect birdsong

Human behaviors can also affect how birds sing.

Studies have found that, in some instances, background noise can weaken territorial responses in males. And light pollution in suburban areas can prolong singing by up to an hour.

In 1962, scientist and conservationist Rachel Carson wrote the book "Silent Spring" after noticing how quiet the spring had become when the bird migration would normally be underway. The pesticide DDT had weakened egg shells, triggering a sharp decline in many bird populations. Many scholars and historians identify this book as leading to the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under President Richard M. Nixon in 1970.

#### Getting started birding by ear

As you start learning bird songs, technology can come in handy. There are now dedicated apps, such as Cornell University's Merlin, that can help you recognize bird songs as you are listening to them.

However, human abilities still outperform this technology, so use apps as a learning tool, not a crutch.

As humans, we have long depended on our ability to communicate with each other. I think we relate to birds because they are such vocal creatures too.

Learning their songs is a lifelong endeavor. Once you start tuning into the natural world, you'll realize that there is something new waiting to be discovered.

*Chris Lituma is an associate professor of wildlife and fisheries resources at West Virginia University. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.*

**MAYO CLINIC Q&A**

## The health benefits of counting steps

**By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)**

**DEAR MAYO CLINIC:** I've read so much about the health benefits of tracking my steps. But there's a lot of confusing information out there. How many is the right number? Are some "steps" better for you than others? Please help.

**ANSWER:** Whether you're tracking steps with your phone, a smartwatch or an old-school pedometer, the result is the same: you'll have a good indicator of how much you're moving during the day. The best device for you is the one you'll use. With many devices, you can set up alerts and goals that remind you to move. And that's what counts. The ultimate goal is to move 150 minutes per week.

#### Reaping the benefits

You're right about the health benefits of getting in your steps. Here's what walking can help you do:

- Control your blood pressure.
- Lose or maintain weight.
- Improve balance and coordination.
- Increase core strength.
- Manage stress and improve mood by releasing endorphins.
- Manage your diabetes.
- Reduce the risk of a heart attack.
- Reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Stay strong and active.
- Improve sleep.
- Slow mental decline.
- Lower the risk of dementia.
- Reduce the risk of some cancers.
- Help you lead a longer life.
- Maintain independent living into older age.

If you're on a medically assisted weight-loss journey, whether that's bariatric surgery or a GLP-1 drug, being physically active will help burn calories, build strength, maintain muscle mass and bone density, and promote sustainable weight loss. It also can help medications work better.

#### Tracking steps

Is there a magic number of steps for reaping these health benefits? Not really. If you can get in 10,000 steps a day, great. Research has shown that 10,000 steps a day can lead to reductions in premature death, with a majority of that reduction happening between 4,000 and 8,000 steps. After 10,000, you'll still see benefits, but they start to plateau.

How you get your steps doesn't really matter. Walking has a cumulative effect on your body across your day. So whether you walk your dog for 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes at night, go for a brisk 30-minute walk or spend an hour moving around the house or working in the yard, those steps all count.

#### Getting started

The best way to start tracking your steps is to take it slow and steady. Listen to your body – it will tell you whether you're trying to do too much. Work more steps into your day by parking farther away from entrances, walking in place while you're waiting for the timer on the microwave to go off, and making multiple trips to bring in packages rather than loading up in just one. You may want to consider getting a walking pad and use it while watching TV or doing food prep in the kitchen.

#### Setting the pace

When you're advised to go for a brisk walk, what does that mean? "Brisk" is different for everyone. The average walking speed to aim for is 3 to 3.5 mph, which a device can help you measure. If you can walk faster safely, great. However, walking slowly is better than not walking at all and will still give you the benefits of moving your body.

The talk test is an easy way to identify a proper intensity. If you're able to talk but find it difficult to carry on a full conversation, that's "brisk" for you. You may not be out of breath, but your breathing is definitely elevated. New research indicates that brisk walking can boost brain function and well-being, as well as physical health.

*– Mackenzie Long, Physical Therapy/Sports Medicine, Mayo Clinic Health System*

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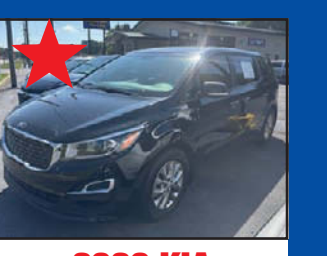

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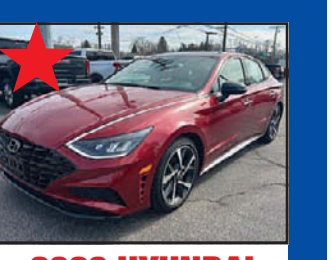

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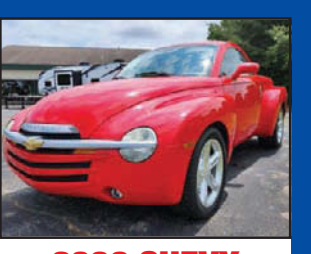

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